

***Barth Society met in Montréal, Canada November 6-7, 2009 and in
New Orleans, Louisiana November 20-21, 2009***

Our meeting in **Montréal** in conjunction with the **American Academy of Religion** featured a Friday afternoon session from 4:00 P.M. to 6:30 P.M. and a Saturday morning session from 9:00 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. The presenters for the Friday afternoon session were **Matthew Baker, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology**, who presented a lecture entitled: *"The Filioque in Barth, Florovsky, and Torrance"* and **Nathan Hieb, Princeton Theological Seminary**, who presented a lecture entitled: *"Atonement and Liberation in Sobrino, Torrance and Barth"*. The Saturday morning session featured a *Panel Discussion* of **Bruce L. McCormack's** book, *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008). The panelists were **Nicholas M. Healy, St. John's University** and **Garrett Green, Connecticut College**. **George Hunsinger, Princeton Theological Seminary** presided. Discussion followed.

Our meeting in **New Orleans** in conjunction with the **Society of Biblical Literature** featured a Friday afternoon session from 4:00 P.M. to 6:30 P.M. and a Saturday morning session from 9:00 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. The presenters for the Friday afternoon session were **Ryan Glomsrud, Harvard University** who presented a lecture entitled: *"Karl Barth: Between Orthodoxy and Pietism"* and **Mark Husbands, Hope College** who presented a lecture entitled: *"Karl Barth: The Struggle for Human Righteousness"*. **George Hunsinger, Princeton Theological Seminary**, presided. The Saturday morning session featured a *Discussion* of **Bruce L. McCormack's** book, *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008). **James J. Buckley, Loyola College in Baltimore** was unable to attend the session because of a schedule conflict. **Mark Husbands of Hope College** graciously agreed to read his paper. **George Hunsinger, Princeton Theological Seminary** was unable to attend. **Paul D. Molnar of St. John's University** presided and read a paper as well. Discussion followed. **Bruce McCormack** was unable to attend either the session in Montréal or the session in New Orleans. Professor **Darrell Guder** read a brief note of explanation from McCormack in Montréal, while President **Iain Torrance** read a similar brief note of explanation in New Orleans.

**The Fifth Annual Barth Conference will be held at Princeton Theological Seminary
June 20-23, 2010**

This Barth Conference is entitled:

"The Church Is As Such a Missionary Church: Barth as a 'Missional Theologian'"
This conference is cosponsored by *The Center for Barth Studies at Princeton Theological Seminary*
and *The Karl Barth Society of North America*.

**Brochures with full details about speakers, schedules and registration are
enclosed with this Newsletter.**

What follows are some summaries of the lectures from Montréal and New Orleans.

“THE ETERNAL ‘SPIRIT OF THE SON’: The *Filioque* in Barth, Florovsky, and Torrance”

Matthew Baker

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

After noting the renewal in trinitarian theology in the West during the 20th century, Baker mentioned that some western theologians favor removing the *filioque* from the creed while others regard it as a “doctrinal misfortune”. In this context, Baker began his lecture observing that Barth’s brief but strong defense of the *filioque* in *CD I/1* merits more serious engagement from Orthodox theologians than it has received thus far.

The first part of Baker’s lecture offered a brief outline of Barth’s defense of the *filioque*, followed by a critique from the perspective of Eastern Orthodox theology. Viewing Barth’s *filioque* as a positive but problematic attempt to secure an account of the Spirit’s *eternal* identity as “the Spirit of the Son,” the second and third sections of the lecture considered the importance of the patristic teaching regarding “the Spirit of the Son” for the life of the Church, as highlighted by the work of Georges Florovsky and Thomas F. Torrance, as a ground for deeper ecumenical agreement in trinitarian doctrine.

In considering Barth’s view of the *filioque*, Baker maintained that his primary intention in *CD I/1* was to explain that who God is for us in revelation is exactly who God is antecedently in himself. Consequently, one could not say that the Spirit is the Spirit of the Son only in revelation and for faith because then one might conclude that the Spirit is only the Spirit of the Father in eternity, in his own proper reality. That would leave us without any objective basis for a relationship between God and us established by the Spirit: it would be only a temporal truth without any eternal content. It would, in Barth’s thinking, undermine revelation. In Baker’s estimation Barth not only relied on Augustine for his thinking, but his Christocentrism and his rejection of natural theology also shaped his view of the *filioque*. Since no one comes to the Father except through the Son, it is the Holy Spirit, distinct from the Father and Son who enables human hearing of the Word and unites us to the Father, without becoming in any way identical with the human spirit. Because it is Christ that the Spirit communicates to us, therefore for Barth the *filioque* is necessary; the *filioque* preserves the insight that the Spirit is never separate from the Son or Word.

Barth rejects as inadequate the formula “through the Son” because it does not lead “to the thought of the full

consubstantial fellowship between Father and Son as the essence of the Spirit, corresponding as a prototype to the fellowship between God as Father and man as His child, the creation of which is the work of the Holy Spirit in revelation.” For Barth what is at stake in the formula is the unity of God. He did not want to hold that God is the cause of the deity; but rather that the Father was always Father of the Son in the unity of the Spirit. In this he followed Augustine.

Barth also speculated about the connection between the *filioque* and the Christian life. He wondered whether or not eastern mysticism which he thought tended to bypass the mediation of Christ toward some sort of direct union with God might result from inattention to the *filioque*. As evidence of this connection, Barth points to the “distinctively unrestrained manner of thought and utterance of the Russian theologians and religious philosophers... obliterating the frontiers of philosophy and theology, of reason and revelation, of spirit and nature, of *pistis* and *sophia*.” Baker mentions that Barth unfortunately, did not name these Russian theologians, although it is possible that he may have been referring to Pavel Florensky and Sergei Bulgakov.

According to Baker, there are several aspects to Barth’s *filioque* defense which the Orthodox theologian can appreciate. Much like Orthodox theology, Barth underscores the radical difference between Creator and creature, the Spirit of God and the spirit of man. Further, Barth’s position is an attempt to give dogmatic expression to the Biblical teaching that the Spirit is “the Spirit of Jesus Christ,” “the Spirit of the Son,” “the Spirit of the Lord,” the Spirit of adoptive sonship. Barth is undoubtedly correct to insist that if this teaching is a merely temporal truth of salvation history, having no ontological foundation in the *eternal* life of God, then the result can only be an “emptying of revelation” – even a dangerous spiritualism in which the Son’s place as the one revelation of the Father is somehow exceeded in favor of some other supposed “revelation of the Spirit.” With Barth, Orthodoxy agrees that the Spirit testifies to no other “word,” casts forward no other “image,” than that of Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son.

But in Baker’s thinking Barth is arguing for an “absolute identity” between being and act and thus between theology and economy that he regards as problematic. According to Baker, it is Barth’s “identity principle” that is the problem, a problem that was Origen’s before him and led Origen to think of an eternal creation; this same thinking was behind the problems evident in Arius’ views. To this problematic, Athanasius responded with a firm distinction between *genesis* and *ktisis*, as well as *ousia* and *boulesis* in God. While the matter here is not exactly parallel; still, the sending of the Spirit is, like the act of creation, an act of the divine *will*. Baker thus asks: without some distinction between being and act, how

does Barth avoid introducing the category of time into God, making revelation an essential – and therefore necessary – aspect of divine being? Baker insists that his rejection of total identity here does not mean that he is not arguing for a genuine unity between time and eternity. In his opinion Barth failed to do justice to the Eastern view when he claimed that it reduced the Son's mediation to the temporal sphere alone. Baker claims that the teaching Barth rejected may have been the teaching of Photius but was not in fact the teaching of later Orthodox theologians. At the Council of Blachernae in 1285 it seems Barth's own views, which followed Athanasius' Letters to Serapion, were affirmed. The fact that the Spirit is from the Father was not meant to undermine the fact that the Spirit is also through the Son. Baker appeals to Gregory Palamas to link the Spirit with the Son as love. Like the Council of Blachernae, Palamas speaks of this Trinitarian relationship in terms of the eternal operation of the divine *will* – without, however, incurring the danger of reducing the Spirit to the energy common to the divine persons, or to a mere relation between them.

Baker also found wanting Barth's conclusion that when the Spirit is said to proceed from the Father alone, that had to mean that the Son was excluded. And with regard to Barth's criticisms of Russian Orthodox theologians, Baker responds that in general this may be largely a caricature, but that with regard to certain Russian theologians such as Vladimir Soloviev and Pavel Florensky, he may be partially correct. But these thinkers, according to Baker, cannot be considered spokespersons for traditional Orthodoxy.

From here Baker presents the thinking of Georges Florovsky as a viable Orthodox alternative to the views that both he and Barth reject. Thus, in contrast to Vladimir Lossky, who thought that the division between East and West was due to the *filioque*, Baker contends that for Florovsky this was not the case at all. Florovsky in fact articulates a highly Christocentric understanding of the Spirit's role in the economy and refused to play off the Pauline concepts of being in Christ and being in the Spirit. Instead he insisted that "our 'unity in the Spirit' is precisely our '*incorporation*' into Christ, which is the *ultimate* reality of Christian existence." "The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of adoption in Christ Jesus, 'the power of Christ,'" by whom we recognize and confess Christ as Lord. Hence, Florovsky opposed giving precedence to the Spirit because by this he believed theologians would unduly emphasize the community in their ecclesiologies and thus miss the fact that it is the living Lord acting in the Spirit who is the one who makes the community what it is. But he also opposed any confusion of the Spirit with the magisterium as he believed was the case with respect to the Vatican's understanding of papal infallibility. Whenever the Spirit is detached from Christ, Florovsky believed the result would be a "Charismatic

Sociology" and "canonical 'Montanism'" which would confuse the Spirit with the community or with the hierarchy. Florovsky did not see all divisions between East and West in terms of the *filioque* and opposed any Orthodox tendency to focus on this because such a focus tended undercut the possibility of real mutual advance toward a better understanding of the Spirit's activity in the church on both sides. Baker presents Florovsky's arguments against Lossky's interpretation of the Spirit insisting that it is imperative that the Spirit be seen as the Spirit of the Son.

Lossky's extreme reactions to the *filioque* caused him to fail to see that the Spirit conforms us to the crucified Christ, as Florovsky argued. While there is potential agreement here between Barth and Florovsky, still, Florovsky did not think that there was any causal role played by the Son in relation to the procession of the Spirit, as Baker believes Barth held to be the case. Thus, Florovsky held the view that the Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son in opposition to Barth's view that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Nonetheless the two theologians agree that "the Holy Spirit... is the Spirit of both the Father and the Son not just in His work *ad extra* and upon us, but... to all eternity." And this, according to Baker, stands firmly in contrast to Barth's statement that "[t]he Eastern doctrine does not contest the fact that this is so in revelation, [b]ut it does not read off from revelation its statements about the being of God 'antedecently in Himself.'" While Baker admits that some in the Eastern Church did indeed drive a wedge between the immanent and economic trinitarian procession of the Spirit, as Barth claimed, he noted that Florovsky firmly rejected any such approach. Therefore Florovsky and Barth had a number of important shared concerns: "the unity of *theologia* and *oikonomia*, the total singularity of Jesus Christ as the one revelation of God and the Christocentric character of the Spirit's operation, the utter freedom of His grace in relation to the Church, man's adoptive entry into that love which exists between the Father and the Son, and the radical difference which remains between the Spirit of God and the human religious spirit."

Interestingly, Florovsky was deeply influenced by Maximus the Confessor. But he was also open to Augustine as the Father of the Church in spite of whatever disagreements may have separated them. Therefore Florovsky did not believe that there was an insurmountable impasse between East and West and instead worked tirelessly with an ecumenical openness that is not always in evidence even among those Orthodox theologians who claim to follow Florovsky today. In the end Baker maintains that while there is a significant bridge between East (in the person of Florovsky) and West (in the person of Barth) in stressing the fact that the Spirit is the Spirit of the Son, still this does not mean that we must follow the *filioque* and thus

follow Barth in affirming the *filioque*. He believes we should affirm that the Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son.

Baker thinks that perhaps the solution to the problems of the *filioque* toward which Florovsky worked can be found in the theology of Thomas F. Torrance. Baker notes the striking resemblance to Florovsky's thinking of Torrance's insistence, following the thinking of Athanasius, especially in his *Letters to Serapion*, that much Western theology has not taken seriously the important fact that the Spirit is *homoousion* with the Son and that therefore one cannot confuse the Holy Spirit either with the church or with individuals. In Torrance's view it was this inseparable relation of the Spirit and Son that directs us away from such confusions in all areas of theology from creation to incarnation to redemption and the doctrine of grace. And it is this stress on the fact that the Spirit is the Spirit of the Son that provides grounds for agreement once more between East and West. For Baker "in contrast to Barth, Torrance's own panacea urges a common abandonment of *all* causal categories, implying a kind of dynamic substantialism in which the terms *arche* and *aitia* are conceived as 'referring to relations or *scheseis* in God which are... beyond all origin (*anarchos*), and beyond all cause (*anaitios*).' This proposal, which rather curiously finds a precedent in the thought of Sergei Bulgakov, may be potentially as problematic for Orthodoxy as the *filioque* defended by Barth."

With the positive concerns expressed by Barth in his defense of the *filioque* and expressed in more distinctly ecclesiological form by both Florovsky and Torrance, Baker concludes his paper noting the following important comment of Torrance as perhaps the best response to Barth's concerns: "It is one of the curious features of church history that the Western Church which had officially championed the addition of the *filioque* clause to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed has tended in practice to ignore it, whereas the Eastern Church which decidedly rejected it has tended to uphold the emphases which it was designed to safeguard — without of course ever agreeing to the formal statement that the Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as the Father" [Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, (London: SCM Press, 1965), p. 229].

"Atonement and Liberation in Sobrino, Torrance and Barth"

Nathan Hieb

Princeton Theological Seminary

Drawing upon his experiences in India, Nathan Hieb asks what contemporary difference Christ's crucifixion makes

within the historical contexts of our lives, particularly for those who suffer. An impasse in the theological literature exists in which some, such as Thomas F. Torrance, focus upon eternal and spiritual reality by relating the cross exclusively to atonement for sin. Others, such as Jon Sobrino, react against this other-worldly tendency by emphasizing the relevance of the cross to the temporal and existential aspect of human life, with particular attention to liberation from suffering. Hieb argues that Karl Barth succeeds in uniting these differing emphases within a single, coherent theology of the cross. His paper consists of three parts. He first mentions three material moves that Barth makes uniting atonement for sin and liberation from suffering. He then briefly sketches the differences in formal structure between the theologies of Torrance, Sobrino, and Barth using categories derived from Hegel's philosophy. Several remarks are then offered concerning the ordering and asymmetry of atonement and liberation in Barth's thought in regard to Christ's cross and the Christian's prophetic vocation of witness.

Barth makes three material moves that unite atonement for sin and liberation from suffering. First, Barth clarifies the relation between sin and suffering. Although human suffering is not the primary focus of Barth's depiction of atonement, suffering's origin in sin is a theme interwoven throughout the *Church Dogmatics*. Barth links sin and suffering most often in one of three ways. First, sin in and of itself constitutes profound distress. When understood in this way, Barth suggests, "Arrogance is seen as pitiable folly, the usurpation of freedom as rigorous bondage, evil lust as bitter torment" (CD II/1, 371). Second, and most significantly for his doctrine of atonement, sin leads to affliction in the form of God's judgment. Third, sin entails suffering as an inevitable consequence.

Understanding suffering as the consequence of sin opens the conceptual space for speaking of innocent suffering in Barth's account, for innocent suffering arises as the consequence of someone else's sin. The innocent sufferer remains a sinner before God. However, this person suffers because of the wrongful actions of others. The significance of this move becomes apparent when we consider two concepts vitally important to Sobrino's theology which may be introduced on this ground. First, the category of "victim" becomes intelligible as the one who suffers the undeserved consequences of someone else's sin. The victim, therefore, suffers innocently. Although victims remain sinners before God, their sin does not cause their victimization at the hands of others. Second, when we view suffering as a consequence of sin, the interpersonal and social category of "injustice" becomes not only intelligible but necessary. Indeed, the categories "victim" and "injustice" mutually imply each other, for victims suffer the consequences of the unjust actions of others, and interpersonal injustice inevitably

leads to the suffering of victims. Simply put, the human as sinner in need of atonement leads to the human as victim in need of liberation.

Second, Barth's view of atonement as primarily expiatory, and his depiction of suffering as the consequence of sin, implies that Christ's removal of sin on the cross entails the removal of the suffering caused by sin. By expiating sin on the cross, Jesus Christ removes the sufficient condition and originating presupposition of unjust suffering. Conversely, when Jesus miraculously heals the afflicted around him he is implicitly confronting the origin of human misery, which is sin. In this way, atonement for sin is the necessary precondition for deliverance from affliction, and liberation from suffering is enfolded within the *telos* of reconciliation with God. We must therefore interpret Christ's miracles of physical healing in light of his final self-giving on Golgotha and read his actions to relieve human suffering as grounded in his final expiation of human sin.

Third, Barth links atonement and liberation within his discussion of the Christian's ethical responsibility. As Christ's earthly ministry points towards the removal of sin and suffering on the cross, so the Christian's life points back to Christ's work of expiation while also pointing ahead to the final redemption of all things. The Christian's life is never more than a reflection or echo of Christ's life, and Christian vocation occurs only in analogical correspondence to Christ's work. Jesus Christ remains primary, determinative, and sovereign; Christians remain secondary, derivative, and dependent. Yet, within this proper ordering and asymmetry, correspondence truly occurs between the Christian and Christ. In light of Christ's atoning and liberating work on the cross, the Christian's life must conform to a distinct ethical character. The Christian first looks to God, before whom she is destitute, impoverished, without right and in desperate need. She experiences the merciful righteousness of God by which her cause is taken up and defended, by which she is vindicated before any and all accusation, and by which she is made righteous through the righteousness of Christ. Profound significance is then attached to the Christian's encounter with any who are vulnerable in a way that she is secure, who are poor in a way that she is rich, or who are distressed in a way that she is at peace. Indeed, Barth claims that she receives a specific "political responsibility" (CD II/1, 387) which includes advocacy for the poor and distressed in light of God's advocacy for her and the protection of any threatened human right in view of the right established for her by God's righteousness. She finds herself bound to the necessary obligation to do all she can to relieve the suffering she encounters in the vulnerable and oppressed around her by virtue of the commonality shared between their condition and her own and by virtue of the mercy both she and they are so

desperate to receive. "By any other political attitude," Barth writes, "[s]he rejects the divine justification" (CD II/1, 387).

Hieb then offers a brief synopsis of his formal analysis of theological models developed in his dissertation. He constructs a critical framework drawn from G.W.F. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* consisting of four categories: externality, particularity, internality, and universality. He argues that Torrance emphasizes externality and particularity in his soteriology, Sobrino stresses internality and universality, and Barth unites externality with internality and particularity with universality in a manner that transcends both of these options and that, furthermore, surpasses Hegel's view of the highest form of human consciousness according to Hegel's own dialectical progression.

Finally, Hieb argues that a distinct ordering and asymmetry marks the relation of atonement and liberation in Barth's thought, for the historical aspect of our lives arises from a deeper, non-empirical determination. All that is existential finds its origin, genuine character, and ultimate *telos* in the eternal drama of election, creation, reconciliation, and redemption. As such, liberation from suffering is placed within a larger narrative that extrinsically grants significance to the historical and existential suffering of humanity. This narrative presents suffering as caused by sin and regards liberation as part of, though not co-extensive with, the salvation offered to humanity through Christ's work of reconciliation. The emphasis granted to the eternal and spiritual aspect of the cross in Barth's theology does not ignore or diminish the actual conditions of suffering and oppression in our world. Rather, efforts to achieve liberation from suffering find their stark urgency and enduring relevance from their placement within the narrative of God's reconciliation of humanity and redemption of all creation. Indeed, this move grants human suffering under sin and injustice a greater importance than it could otherwise attain if it were defined in a self-determined manner or according to empirical means alone. Sin and suffering find their true weight and significance in the cross of Jesus Christ where they were borne by God that they might be removed from humanity. In the person and work of Jesus Christ, the two aspects of the cross find their proper ordering and inseparable relation. As primary and determinative, the eternal aspect of the cross enfolds, circumscribes, and grounds the historical and existential aspect such that human suffering finds its significance in relation to eternal reality or not at all.

In turn, the inseparability of atonement for sin and liberation from suffering determines the character of the Christian's vocation. The word, act, and life pattern of Christian witness to Christ's work of reconciliation includes opposition to all forms of unjust oppression as

the sinful causes of human suffering. Christians, therefore, are given the responsibility to work towards the sociopolitical liberation of all as part of their prophetic vocation of witness. As they liberate the oppressed, Christians summon all to prophetic vocation in service to all which entails a particular ethic, mentioned earlier, that impinges upon every area of life. The oppressed who are liberated through *kenotic* Christian witness in speech and action find that the *telos* of this liberation is participation in the Christian vocation that includes their own *kenosis* and their own action for the liberation of others. We are lifted from the depths only to be beckoned back into the depths in self-emptying service to others. We are called to reflect the humble servant's heart of Christ. Human suffering is no longer only the consequence of sin but becomes by grace an analogical correspondence to the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Further, Christian suffering directs the world's gaze to the cross where Christ bears all suffering and thereby reveals the significance of all human distress. Because of Christ's work of reconciliation, we experience with our affliction a liberation that is eternal and historical, spiritual and existential, and that beckons the world to the fullness of life available only through the cross of Jesus Christ.

**"Response to Bruce L. McCormack,
Orthodox and Modern"**
Garrett Green
Connecticut College

Garrett Green began by noting that McCormack is a "theologian's theologian" since he is not intimidated by old theological clichés but instead pursues Barth studies from a perspective that is both disappointed and frustrated with theological practice today.

McCormack wants to convey the sense in which Barth's dogmatics has thoroughly transformed Christian theology. The thesis that runs throughout his book is this: "what Barth was doing, in the end, was seeking to understand what it means to be orthodox *under the conditions of modernity*" (17). McCormack does this by tracing, in detail, how Barth's theology developed throughout his career. *Orthodox and Modern* consists of a selection of shorter writings on Barth following upon his earlier study, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909-1936*, and is grouped into three thematic sections: 1) "Karl Barth's Relationship to Nineteenth-Century Theology"; 2) "Karl Barth's Relationship to Postliberalism and Postmodernism"; and 3) "Karl Barth's Theological Ontology". These are followed by a short concluding selection of "Occasional Writings". There is some repetition and this is even helpful in the final section where the topic is heady and the language is technical.

Green first noted the achievements of the book and then raised some critical questions in connection with Part II while choosing to "avoid the thicket of McCormack's fascinating and controversial interpretation of Barth's theological ontology in Part III".

McCormack wants to present a Barth who is not a neo-orthodox thinker who opposes modernity in order to repristinate a pre-critical theology. Rather he is modern since he attempted to reinterpret the tradition in light of modern concerns. This means that "it was the rise of 'historical consciousness'— . . . the awareness that all human thinking is conditioned by historical (and cultural) location—that was most basic to the emergence of what we tend to think of as 'modern' theology today" (10-11). However modern Barth's instincts, his intentions always were to be orthodox by first looking to scripture, which always needs interpretation. This means always being in dialogue with synods, councils and church teachings from the Apostles to the present. McCormack demonstrates this in Part I first by interpreting Barth "as a nineteenth-century theologian" (22). By showing how Barth's shares much with Schleiermacher and his successors, notwithstanding his severe critique of some of its tendencies, McCormack opposes this to the "neoorthodox" misreading of Barth. Green is here reminded of the later Hans Frei who acknowledged both divergences and convergences with Schleiermacher. One of their key convergences is that for Barth "revelation was a 'giving,' not a 'given'" (81), not a *datum* but rather a *dandum*. And they both give us a critical theology that leaves room for divine action in revelation (84).

In Part II McCormack turns his attention to "postliberal" and "postmodern" readings of Barth focusing first on the thinking of Frei and Lindbeck. Reading this part of the book, Green says, left him feeling like a Red Sox fan who suddenly discovered himself surrounded by Yankee fans. That is the way he occasionally feels when travelling from Connecticut to Princeton Seminary. Before examining a single text by these Yale theologians, Green notes that McCormack offers a rather "Jaundiced overview in which the other team's theology is said to have 'a highly formal character' that 'fosters a preoccupation with . . . the *internal logic* of 'first order' theological statements . . . while largely suspending questions of reality-reference . . . (114)". McCormack attributes the motive for this to "a powerful reaction against the modern use of the Bible as historical source," which leads to an historical critical approach that McCormack thinks is one of the central goals of the Yale theologians, who prefer to read the Bible as literature in light of cultural and literary anthropology. As an aside Green pointed out that no one who knows Frei's book *The Identity of Jesus Christ* "could possibly believe that his interest in theology was merely 'formal' or that he doubted its reference to 'reality.'" McCormack's

exclusive focus with respect to Frei's work is on a single posthumously published fragment in which Frei sketches a five-part typology of modern theology which McCormack admits is "relatively unpolished". Nonetheless McCormack takes this single draft as "a kind of apologia on behalf of Barth's theology . . . [which] provides a fine introduction to Frei's mature understanding of Barth's significance" (116). Green thinks this is "surely unjustified and leads to just the kind of unbalanced reading of Frei's work that we find in this essay". Frei continually worked on his ideas and was reluctant to publish them so that his students wondered whether or not he'd allow a work he was rumoured to have been working on for a long time to be published. That was his *Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*. Based on his personal knowledge of Frei, Green believes it is problematic to seize on a brief unpublished work in progress as the key to his theology, instead of attending to his major published works. According to Green, Barth was Frei's great theological model.

In fairness, Green mentions that, while McCormack has grave reservations about Frei, he still compliments him by saying that he "stood virtually alone in his willingness to identify himself publicly with Barth's theology. Had he not done so, it is unlikely that there would be the kind of significant interest in Barth's theology which is now emerging" (124).

Green sees McCormack's quarrel with Frei resting on Frei's reluctance to stress Barth's theological realism due mainly, according to McCormack, to Frei's social location. While Green agrees with this, he also believes that this comment gives a clue not only to Frei's motives but to McCormack's. In his attempt to identify Frei's social location, McCormack in fact gets it wrong because he claims Frei spent his career at a divinity school attached to a major University when in reality, the latter part of his career was spent "in a secular university department of religious studies, one whose founding had precipitated a bitter fight within the faculty of the divinity school." This social environment did not, as McCormack implies, compel Frei to justify himself or his discipline. Rather his concern was about how to do theology and how to be a theologian in a world inhabited by members and colleagues of a secular university. Instead of working on how to respond to liberal German theology of the nineteenth century, Frei worked on how to explain theology to secular outsiders. This task was made even more difficult since Frei was convinced that one could not connect theology with other disciplines or belief systems via natural theology or any philosophy appealing to universally accessible truths. This was the challenge that Frei attempted to meet, relying on Barth's theology.

The mistake McCormack makes, according to Green, is to interpret the Yale theologians as if they worked within

his social setting which is that of one of the largest and finest faculties in the world surrounded by theological specialists and focused within the Reformed tradition. The essay he uses in dealing with Frei and Lindbeck begins with this sentence: "My goal . . . is to identify and critically reflect upon the leading tendencies in recent English-language Barth research" (109). The subtitle of this part of the book reads "Nonfoundational Readings of Barth in Yale 'Postliberalism'" (113). Yet Frei and Lindbeck were not engaged in "Barth research" nor were they trying to give a "reading" of Barth's theology when they wrote their books. Those tasks are what McCormack does, and does very well, according to Green.

Next, Green raised some questions to McCormack's treatment of postmodernism. Specifically referring to McCormack's highly critical review of Graham Ward's book, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology* (1995), Green noted that, although Ward never responded, McCormack maintains that "his attempt to use Derridean categories to interpret Barth's theology of the Word has subsequently been defended by Garrett Green . . ." (292, n.2). In Green's estimation, however, McCormack overstated the case, since Green never intended to defend Ward's argument in toto, but only his attempt to highlight similarities between Barth's account of language and Derrida's "economy of *différance*," and to point out some places where McCormack misreads both Derrida and Ward.¹

In McCormack's review, he accused Ward of illegitimately appropriating Barth for "'postmodern' concerns," and for "insufficient knowledge of his life and thought generally". McCormack's rejection of Ward's approach concludes with a choice: *either* Barth's theology on its own terms *or* "the abyss of deconstruction." As in his critique of the Yale theologians, so here McCormack appears in his role as "gatekeeper and guardian of the true Barth". What Green attempted to show was that there were more extensive and significant parallels between Barth and Derrida than McCormack allows and that these should be pursued as ways of shedding new light on aspects of Barth's own thought and as a way of opening a conversation between theologians and post-modern philosophers. Ironically, Green contends that much of his analysis of Barth stresses many of the points that are central to McCormack's reading of Barth, most notably, his actualistic view of language and the dialectic of veiling and unveiling with respect to revelation.

In sum Green notes that both Barth and Derrida agree on the limitations of human language; all its use falls short

¹ See Garrett Green, *Theology, Hermeneutics and Imagination: The Crisis of Interpretation at the End of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 145, 156-57.

of its mark. They even agree that metaphysics is the wrong way to think about language. Based on this convergence, Green thinks some sort of dialogue between them might be fruitful. Barth's thinking allows us to hear Derrida's views as a "philosophical description of what it means to be language-users in the age of grace". We may hear the postmodernists deconstructionist warning against "the metaphysics of presence" as a reminder of the dangers of attempting to usurp God's role in human speech and writing. And Derrida's way of using signs offers "new conceptual tools for restating in our own time" Barth's understanding of veiling and unveiling with regard to revelation. In addition, Green thinks Derrida's notion of *supplément* offers a useful model for the conversation between Christian theologians and postmodern philosophers that connects nicely with a Christian view of our common life under grace. Since no text can ever be complete or self-sufficient, this implies that every text needs supplementation. All texts inevitably are limited in Derrida's thinking and this coheres with the "logic of grace" because this too points to the need for supplementation. It also shows why we need each other, namely, because none of us is hermeneutically self-sufficient. Christians attribute this situation to grace and not to the unfortunate limitations of finitude: God intended that we cannot say what needs to be said on our own. We also need those who preceded us in the faith—this might even be called the "hermeneutical communion of saints". Taking umbrage at Ward's suggestion that "Derrida has provided Barth's theology of language . . . with a philosophical supplement," McCormack "neglects to note that Ward goes on to say, 'Barth provides Derrida's economy of *différance*, with a theological supplement.'" While secularists might have greater difficulty accepting this "supplementarity" than theologians, it is Green's belief that from the theological side of the conversation, there are some promising openings.

With regard to such a dialogue, Green thinks that McCormack has taken a stance that could be termed "proprietary". "He seems suspicious of any attempt to carry ideas learned at the feet of Karl Barth beyond the seminary walls". Opposing this stance, Green appeals to Barth who never imagined he was creating a perennial theology but instead insisted that dogmatics needed to be done anew in every age. He even made use of philosophy in an ad hoc manner. In Green's own experience, the thinking of Richard Rorty who undermined the idea that knowledge needs a "foundation" of "incorrigible truths" actually helped to make Barth's rejection of philosophical foundations for Christian theology appear more plausible and indeed opened avenues for conversation as well. In this context, Green notes that "McCormack, missing the point entirely, tells us that Barth was 'clearly not a foundationalist,' adding that 'it is scarcely imaginable to me that he would have found any sympathy with Rorty, Bernstein, et al.'" (126).

Green, thinking that Barth might well have recognized an ally in Rorty, asks: "Are we then to assume that not only Barth's dogmatics but also his philosophical views are to be normative to us today? Evidently for McCormack his philosophical pronouncements have proleptic authority even over the philosophy of later ages and other cultures". It is Green's view that we must not simply attempt to guard the purity of Barth's teaching, thereby becoming the kind of Barthians that Barth abhorred. Rather must we venture into a world that is growing increasingly deaf to the gospel and take some risks, in solidarity with Karl Barth, in carrying out our theological vocations.

"Karl Barth, German-Language Theology, and the Catholic Tradition" Nicholas M. Healy St. John's University, Queens, NY

Healy began by agreeing with McCormack that Karl Barth's response to the Enlightenment is by far the most promising way forward for Christian theological inquiry, provided that it is understood properly. However, English-speaking interpreters especially, misread him to a greater or lesser extent; finally, the Protestant German-language tradition of modern theology after Barth is the only form of contemporary theological inquiry that adequately grapples with the consequences of the Enlightenment. The others, including the work of Hans Frei and George Lindbeck, mistakenly read Barth as either a neo-orthodox, and thus as a naive-realist, or postmodern, and thus as a non-realist. What makes Barth's project the way forward is that it is critically realist, representing "orthodox" Christian doctrine "*under the conditions of modernity*" (his emphasis, p. 17), mediating Christian doctrine in a post-Kantian world, using Kant's limitation of "the grasp of human knowing in order to make room for divine action in revelation" (p. 84).

Healy suggested that there is a grand narrative at work here. For McCormack, premodern or postmodern theology is wanting, while "modern" theology of the right kind is the sole alternative. The word "premodern" labels "older trains of thought" "no longer considered viable by the vast majority of European theologians" (p. 9). When used of a contemporary, it is pejorative, as for example, John Webster's Barth is accused of being "a bit too 'premodern'" (p. 164). Postmodern theology, on the other hand, is merely a form of "romanticism".

What then is wrong with premodern theology? In the course of his book, McCormack discusses three closely linked mistakes among those premodern and contemporaries who use the *analogia entis* and accept the metaphysics on which it is based. First, they think true knowledge of God can be had without being informed and governed by revelation in Jesus Christ. Second, their

method ignores or rejects our evident need for God to act in order for us to know God, since God alone brings our language into correspondence with God and not we ourselves. And third – the crux of this particular debate – they assert not only the possibility of knowledge of God apart from Christ and apart from prevenient grace, but they postulate a mistaken *kind* of knowledge: knowledge of God as God is in himself, in distinction from how he is and acts towards us. McCormack rejects the notion that it is within “the capacity of any human being to know what God would have been without us, to know, in fact, how the divine being would have been structured had God not determined to be God for us in Jesus Christ” (p. 299). These three aspects of the analogical method, either singly or in combination, are forms of speculation, the “bane of early-church theology” (p. 274). And according to McCormack, “Barth’s conflict with the Roman Catholic version [of the *analogia entis*] was and always remained a conflict between his own covenant ontology and the essentialist ontology presupposed by the Catholic tradition, which von Balthasar’s thought continued to embody” (p. 200).

So Healy then turned to question whether the premodern Catholic tradition actually engaged in any of these three forms of speculation. He oriented his argument around the discussion of the *analogia entis* in Jüngel’s, *God as the Mystery of the World*. There Jüngel takes to task the Protestant polemic against what he (ironically) calls this “horrible phantom” of “grasping after God”.² He notes how these polemicists presuppose belief in a metaphysics of absolute distinction and difference between God and humanity, a belief shared by Kant. This leads them to misunderstand Barth’s remark, made in the introduction of the first volume of the *CD*, that the *analogia entis* is “the invention of the anti-Christ” because of which one could not become a Catholic. Jüngel argues that the Catholic tradition did not use the analogy in the way they were accused of doing. He appeals to the work of Erich Przywara, who clearly upheld the doctrine of the greater dissimilarity of all analogical language applied to God that was defined at the 4th Lateran Council.³ However, Przywara’s theory of analogy is inadequate in that it makes the other mistakes noted above. He and the Catholic tradition fail to come to terms with what “the Bible calls *revelation*”, namely, that “*event* in which God becomes accessible as God in language”.⁴

² Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, trans. D.L. Guder (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 282.

³ Jüngel, *Mystery*, p. 283.

⁴ Jüngel, *Mystery*, p. 288, his emphases. I do not address the issue of God being static here, partly because there is insufficient space and partly because enough (surely?) has been written on the matter to lay this canard to rest. For a vigorous defense of the traditional Catholic understanding of God as *actus purus* yet unchanging, see

The first thing to recall by way of response is that the epistemological question was not anywhere near so central for the premodern Catholic tradition as it is for Jüngel and McCormack. The primary source for the modern theory of analogy found in Przywara is Thomas Aquinas, but Aquinas does not, unlike Przywara, *ground* his theological language on a theory of analogy as a prolegomenon. When he talks about the possibility of knowledge of God in the *Summa Theologiae* (ST 1.12 and 13), it is after he has already been developing his doctrine of God.⁵ Analogy is not the condition of possibility for such talk, but rather a “fitting” way of making sense of what we already know: that God makes it possible for us to say true things about God in faith.⁶ For Thomas knowledge of God comes in two forms, as it did for the premoderns generally: one through revelation, the other apart from direct revelation in Jesus Christ. He admits the latter because he finds grounds for it in Scripture and therefore cannot deny it. As a Christian theologian, however, Thomas’s theology is always intended to be governed by the Scriptural witness to Jesus Christ. There have been many arguments about what he is doing in the first part of his exposition of the doctrine of God in the *ST* (1.2-26). But it would certainly be a naive mistake to read Thomas as if he were a philosophical thinker engaged in a kind of deduction of God’s being and attributes from principles generally available. If we read Thomas aside from Catholic neo-scholasticism and Protestant polemics, we can see that he is working within the context of faith in order to develop language about God that will be useful for the life and work of the church.

When Thomas moves to the doctrine of the Trinity as such in question 27, he inquires more explicitly into what can be known of God through revelation (since he believes the Trinity cannot be known otherwise). While it is true the notion of “revelation as event” cannot be found in the premoderns, it is clearly the case that knowledge of God – true, salvific knowledge⁷ – comes only by giving oneself up to a new way of life, the life of faith. Faith is not only something we do: believing or trusting in God. Faith is a response to something God

Thomas G. Weinandy, OFM Cap, *Does God Change?* (Petersham: St Bede’s, 1985), and by the same author, *Does God Suffer?* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000). More briefly and to the point at issue here, see Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), pp. 146-9.

⁵ See Davies, *Thought*, p. 73.

⁶ For a detailed account of Thomas’s “fittingness” arguments, see Gilbert Narcisse OP, *Les Raisons de Dieu* (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1997).

⁷ While there may be other ways to know something of God, they are inadequate, misleading or much worse unless governed by the knowledge of faith brought to life by charity.

does to us, “infusing” it in us and thereby drawing us up into a relation to God that lies completely beyond our capacities. In faith, God works in us “inwardly by grace” (ST 2/2.6.2) and then perfects us by the grace of charity (ST 1.7.2). Grace moves us beyond the Przywarian limitation of the always “still greater distance” of analogous language, to the strong affirmations Jüngel demands – rightly – on the basis of 2 Corinthians 1.18-21.⁸ God’s gracious action is *always* Christoform, because grace is the action of Christ, as Thomas indicates in his discussion of “capital grace” (ST 3.8). Moreover, grace is *always* needed in order for us to know and love truly, for it is the action of the Holy Spirit who, “together with the Father and the Son, [who] moves and protects us” (ST 1/2.109.9 ad 2).⁹

The third form of speculation, according to McCormack, is to talk about God as such, beyond what can be known from his creative and redemptive action. Thomas does indeed do this, in common with the premodern tradition generally. Yet he does not do it quite as McCormack describes. To see the difference, we need to examine the logical force and direction of material theological arguments within the doctrine of God. These usually take the form of transcendental arguments, arguments that move from x , where x is known with some certainty and in sufficient detail, to y , where y is/are the condition(s) for x . McCormack himself lays out the basic form: “On the basis of this Self-revelation...what must God be like if he can do what he has in fact done?” That is, given the Scriptural witness to God’s acts in Jesus Christ, what can or must we say about God? McCormack then lays out the specific form of the question he focuses on: “What is the condition of the possibility in eternity for the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God in time?” (p. 58).

Thomas does something formally much the same throughout his discussion of the doctrine of God (ST 1.2-43). His exposition is a presentation of the faith, moving from some elements faith shares with non-revealed knowledge of God (qq 2-26), through God as known only in faith, as triune (qq. 27-43). In the latter section, Thomas concentrates mostly on the immanent

Trinity since he shares the traditional Catholic belief (believed to be based on Scripture) that God is God, and so was and is always perfectly the same triune God irrespective of his actions as creator and savior. The “transcendental arguments” Thomas presents as he lays out his understanding of the immanent trinity (and in the earlier questions, too) do not claim anything about God as such that cannot be supported by Scripture.¹⁰ Thus he argues that the second person is fittingly named the Word and the Image of God because he finds these terms there. The third person is fittingly named Love and Gift, due to the same source. We know these things of God’s immanent life simply because Scripture tells us so. Anything that goes beyond Scripture has no force of itself, for what Thomas says with regard to the Holy Spirit applies generally: “We ought not to say about God anything which is not found in Holy Scripture either explicitly or implicitly” (ST 1.36.2 ad 1). To be sure, he discusses processions, essence, attribution, persons, and other such non-scriptural concepts, but this is by way of offering explanatory hypotheses about God’s triune life that make God’s actions in Jesus Christ reasonable to faith. The truth of faith does not at all depend on such hypotheses, nor can they be permitted to guide our interpretation of Scripture except insofar as they display what it says more clearly. In this, Thomas exemplifies the “epistemological reserve” with regard to the doctrine of God that Lewis Ayres has noted is characteristic of orthodox premoderns.¹¹ Theological principles that limit human knowing prevent him from pushing further into the doctrine of God than Scripture will support.

Thomas’s arguments, then, are transcendental, but do not have the force of modern transcendental deductions, which usually claim necessity. Kant believed that the conditions of the possibility for human knowledge are necessarily and uniquely those he laid out in his critique. His account of human knowing is proposed as the right one and as such should govern and structure all subsequent developments in the relevant areas of philosophy and related fields, including theology.¹²

McCormack’s transcendental argument for his doctrine of God appears to claim to have the force of a necessary deduction rather than an explanatory hypothesis. This

⁸ Jüngel, *Mystery*, p. 285-7.

⁹ Thomas, of course, would say these two ways of describing the gracious agent follow from Scripture. But they are, of course, one action, on the principle that all God’s actions *ad extra* are indivisible, a principle encapsulated in his doctrine of God’s simplicity. There is obviously much more to say here about Thomas’s complex understanding of grace. At the least, I would need to discuss his distinctions between operative and cooperative, habitual and the “second movement” of the Holy Spirit. I give a brief account in my *Thomas Aquinas: Theologian of the Christian Life* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 107-131.

¹⁰ Or at least that is his expressed intent. Of course, we invariably import something from elsewhere; how could we not?

¹¹ “The shaping of Trinitarian theology one sees here has noticeably moved away from the epistemological reserve intrinsic to pro-Nicene thought”, Ayres, *Nicaea*, p. 409.

¹² The validity of necessary transcendental arguments has become more doubtful within philosophical inquiry. See, e.g., S. Körner, “The Impossibility of Transcendental Deductions”, *The Monist* 51 (1967), 317-31; Roderick M. Chisholm, *The Foundations of Knowing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1982) pp. 95-99.

would seem to follow from his confidence that the doctrine is secure enough that he can then *reverse* the argument's direction and make the doctrine fundamental. Having found the condition of the possibility for revelation in Jesus Christ within God's eternal decision for election, McCormack proposes we now reconstruct our account of the economy of salvation on this basis.

From a premodern point of view, McCormack's doctrine of election, so described, would appear speculative and uncritical. The error is twofold. First, the proposed doctrine of election is grounded not upon Scripture but on a transcendental deduction, and thus upon logic rather than revelation. Without the exegesis that would demonstrate how Scripture requires or permits the doctrine (or the move more formally), it is a form of inference that a theological critique would suggest is invalid. The error is then compounded when the doctrine is said to require a reconstruction of Christian doctrine on its basis, rather than upon Scripture. For a premodern Catholic, both these moves would be mistakes.¹³ They transgress the limits of human knowledge of God, limits appropriate to the subject of theology rather than derived from philosophy.

McCormack notes how "the problem of knowing God, the problem of revelation" is the central concern of Barth (p. 162-3). This is what makes Barth a modern theologian, for it is Kant's critique of classical metaphysics that has set up the problem that he sought to solve. The notion of "problem solving" seems to be a characteristic of the style of modern theology, not least within the German-speaking tradition. Theological matters are to be sorted out scientifically by means of rigorous logic.¹⁴ For a mediating theology in a world where the human is conceived as the center and arbiter of all, the problem becomes one of finding ways to have God make sense to humanity and bring God within our purview. McCormack does not necessarily intend to do this, and certainly not so flat-footedly. But this way of understanding theological inquiry is reflected in even so profound a theologian as Jüngel, in his dictum that "God is thinkable as one who speaks because and to the extent that he is human in and of himself".¹⁵ While this statement may not be wrong, it would, Healy believes, appear far too blunt to a premodern or a traditional

¹³ In my view, von Balthasar makes formally the same mistakes, which are more significant than anything that derives from his use of the *analogia entis*.

¹⁴ Consider, e.g., Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology: Volume I* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988) where the express concern is to "maintain the precision, discrimination, and objectivity that are desirable and attainable in scientific investigation" (p. x), and address "the myriad problems inherent in the traditional language of Christian doctrine" (p. xi).

¹⁵ Jüngel, *Mystery*, p. 289.

Catholic. The emphasis on the knowledge question seems to overwhelm the doctrine of God.¹⁶

As a scholastic, Aquinas certainly differs from the church Fathers in his greater attention to making logical distinctions and similar clarifications. But he shares the premodern view that theology is not about the business of solving problems, least of all the problem of knowledge of God. God gives of his endless goodness and love and truth in overflow; God *is* Gift, both Giver and what is Given. God is never a problem. As such, God is mystery, and it is the function of theology to do all it can to bring to light the mystery that is God, not to penetrate it or resolve it as if it were a mystery in the contemporary sense, but so that we may more reverently contemplate it and live in truer relation to it. This is speculative only when it sets up a necessary formal or material principle that is not derived from Scripture. Barth thought of speculation as the attempt to bypass or go beyond the witness of Scripture. The best of the premoderns would agree and arguably did not do so any more than Barth did.

"Karl Barth: Between Orthodoxy and Pietism"

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Instead of presenting Barth as the culmination of Reformed theology, Glomsrud offers a brief historiographical reconstruction in order to claim that Barth is closer to the Radical stream of Protestantism and the mediating theology of the nineteenth century. His paper developed in four parts: First, he explored the surprising and usually neglected reception of Barth's theology in the years immediately leading up to his call to Göttingen. Second, Glomsrud discussed the reception shift that took place together with a host of uncomfortable associations that came with Barth's new identity during the years of his honorary professorship and beyond. Third, Glomsrud explored the historiographical maneuvering among Barth's progeny where some of the ambiguities that have crept into our heavily "theologized" descriptions of Barth's legacy were then addressed. Finally, a brief introduction of some of the underlying theological motifs in Barth's early dogmatics that generated and encouraged many of the historiographical assessments that remain in vogue today was offered.

¹⁶ An insightful analysis of the distinction between post-Enlightenment and premodern theology can be found in Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983).

The initial reviews of the first *Romans* commentary alleged that Barth was an Anabaptist and religious Radical, a spiritual enthusiast, and essentially non-conforming theologian.¹⁷ This was the charge of New Testament scholar Adolf Jülicher as well as Karl Ludwig Schmidt, both of whom compared Barth to the patristic-era rebel, Marcion.¹⁸ Even Rudolf Bultmann characterized Barth's commentary as "enthusiastic revivalism".¹⁹ Walther Köhler made the connection between Barth and radicalism even more explicit by drawing a parallel to the sixteenth-century Anabaptist theologian Caspar Schwenkfeld.²⁰ And finally, Harnack, the chief critic, joined the chorus and accused Barth of being a modern day version of Thomas Müntzer.²¹ In fact, just before the public outbreak of their dispute in the series of open letters, Harnack disposed of Barth in person with the prophecy that Barth would likely "found a sect and receive inspirations".²² In Glomsrud's understanding, Harnack developed this critique of religious enthusiasm by pointing out the disruptive social implications of Barth's project, thus associating him with Schwenkfeld's Radical-spiritualism, Müntzer's anarchic theo-politics, and a host of other nineteenth-century "grumblers, pessimists, and *literati*". As it stood, this name-calling amounted to an unqualified rejection of Barth as an Anabaptist in the tradition of Kierkegaardian pietism.

From here Glomsrud notes that, while he disagrees with these criticisms, nonetheless, he wants to acknowledge that the question of Protestant radicalism opens up a new mode of analysis that actually comports fairly well with the history of Protestantism from the eighteenth century down to our own day, and more specifically with Karl Barth's immediate theological-ecclesiastical context.

The reception narrative shifted radically as Barth turned from religious criticism to historical theology and dogmatic construction during the Göttingen professorship. To the absolute befuddlement of many onlookers,

¹⁷ These charges and their significance are rehearsed in Ryan Glomsrud, "The Cat-Eyed Theologians: Karl Barth and Franz Overbeck", *Journal for the History of Modern Theology / Zeitschrift für neuere Theologiegeschichte* 16:1 (November, 2009), pp. 37-57.

¹⁸ Adolf Jülicher, "Ein Moderner Paulus-Ausleger", *Die Christliche Welt* 34 (1920), pp. 453-57.

¹⁹ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden (Phila.: Fortress Press, 1976), p. 113, quoting Barth, "Preface" to the German reprint of *Der Römerbrief* (first edition).

²⁰ Busch, p. 113.

²¹ Busch, pp. 113, 115.

²² Letter to Eduard Thurneysen, in *Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth-Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914-1925*, trans. James D. Smart (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964), 20 April 1920, pp. 49-50 (italics mine). See also Busch, p. 115.

Barth began to lecture on the Heidelberg Catechism (1921), the theologies of Calvin and Zwingli (1922, 1922/23), the Reformed Confessions (1923), and finally on dogmatic theology in conversation with Protestant orthodoxy. These last lectures assumed the form of a medieval, Lombard-style *Sentences* commentary, using the compilation of Reformed theology by Heinrich Heppe as his basic textbook.²³ In the process, the charge of Anabaptism was gradually eclipsed so that Barth had a starkly different reputation at the end of the decade than he had had at the beginning.

With this shift of emphasis Barth became a "Reformed" Dogmatician to friends and foes alike. The crux of the matter, T.F. Torrance explained, and the sort of concern that Barth later addressed in his Foreword to *Church Dogmatics* I/1 (1932), is that critics, but even many "would be friends were aghast at this turn of events and began to accuse him of a lapse back into *scholasticism*."²⁴

While many of Barth's heirs prefer to think of him as Reformed rather than Anabaptist, his thinking had to be differentiated from "Scholastic Calvinism" since his theology had little to do with binding confessionalism or rigid, doctrinal nit-picking – what a recent author has summed up as *theological necrophilia*.²⁵ In sum, according to Glomsrud, scholars take great care to argue that Barth was loyal to the tradition, but ultimately transcended it on every level. In the process, a number of highly paradoxical descriptions of Barth's theological identity have become the standard historiographical fare. The real point here is that Barth was no mindless regurgitator of orthodoxy; in that sense he was Reformed and not simply scholastic.

To see just how Barth was disconnected from the Tradition, Glomsrud discusses how Barth was regarded as a Reformed theologian who was free to be at odds with the Reformed tradition. Barth was thus willing to be taught by Calvin, but also quite willing to come to conclusions different from Calvin. T. F. Torrance and Bruce McCormack represent the majority view in demanding that Barth followed the intention if not the precision of confessional Protestantism.²⁶ Scholasticism,

²³ See Bruce L. McCormack, "A Scholastic of a Higher Order: The Development of Karl Barth's Theology, 1921-31", (Ph.D. dissertation: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1989).

²⁴ T.F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology 1910-1931* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1962), p. 105.

²⁵ See Mike Higton and John C. McDowell, eds., *Conversing with Barth* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004).

²⁶ A classic discussion of Word and Spirit is found in John Calvin's exchange of letters with Cardinal Sadoletto. See John Calvin, *A Reformation Debate: John*

in their interpretation, and to a lesser extent confessional orthodoxy itself, is defined as a preference for the “dead letter” of traditionalism over against the life-giving Spirit.

From the Roman Catholic perspective, Balthasar relocated Barth, strangely according to Glomsrud, *within Christendom*, and even *within a spiritualized Protestantism*, but to the exclusion of historical, concrete Reformation or Calvinist churches. This move, accomplished by recourse to radical rhetoric, put Barth in closer proximity to pre-Tridentine theology, especially the patristic and medieval tradition. From Balthasar’s point of view, Barth’s thinking brought him closer to a more ecumenically desirable construction of Protestantism that was closer to the theology of the universal church. Others agree with this assessment. According to Glomsrud, Barth historiography tends to pit Spirit against letter and then by implication contrasts a rather abstract, spiritualized, and noumenal (i.e. unreachable) concept of “tradition” against traditionalism. While Barth and his theological progeny announce that they are properly *appreciative of and attentive to* the past witness of the church, they have *in principle if not in practice* unhinged “orthodoxy” and a “Reformed” articulation of the faith from creeds, confessions, or any written document (the one exception being the Barmen Declaration), which should be understood more properly as an example of the church declaring itself to be *in statu confessionis*, which was an *extra-ordinary* situation overlying the ordinary confession of faith.²⁷ In all of this,

Calvin and Jacopo Sadoletto, ed. John C. Olin (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1966); *Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Against the Libertines*, trans. and ed. Benjamin Wirt Farley (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1982).

²⁷ Here an in principle/in practice distinction is required because in practice Barth and many of his theological heirs continue to offer some of the best renderings of Reformation Gospel themes in contemporary scholarship, sometimes even more compellingly than do those who in principle are meant to abide in practice by classical Reformed teaching. Barth lamented this situation in his early lectures on the Reformed confessions, warning that the problem is not simply that some churches have *openly* lost their confession, but that others *secretly* lost it long ago. The problematic point, however, is that many today are insufficiently dialectical in their articulation of the slogan, *reformata semper reformanda* (*Reformed and always reforming*). In other words, there is a one-sided emphasis on the fallible, non-enduring nature of the confessional witness because of a privileging of dynamism and development that seems to flow more from Anabaptist spirit and letter antithesis (via Hegelian and post-Hegelian philosophical commitments) than the biblical witness. Regarding the church

Barth and many of his heirs represent a radical *Zwinglian* disassociation of the Bible and revelation, sign and thing signified, tradition and traditionalism, and word and spirit. This is what allows Barth, in the end, to “reconstruct the whole of ‘orthodox’ teaching,” as McCormack has described it, “from the ground up” and yet remain the tradition’s most pristine spiritualized representative.²⁸

In sum, the historiographical model in play here represents something of an upending of terms: Barth’s new Reformed designation held fast, but was redefined so that his particular way of relating to the tradition was not only justified on spiritualizing grounds, but could be thought of as *the most consistent out-working or culmination of Calvin’s Reformed theology*. This historiographical “distancing operation” has been so effective, that a fundamentally dynamic and revisionist approach to the tradition has become the gold standard for defining the term “Reformed” in our own time. Unfortunately, many of the assumptions on which this historiographical construction rests are simplistic caricatures of Protestant orthodoxy, and a vast body of secondary literature could be cited in defence of this critique.²⁹

Glomsrud urges scholars to consider that the critique of the classical Reformed conception of Word and Spirit, Spirit and letter, and confessional authority is the legacy of Radical Protestant influences on the mediating tradition, so that he would argue that pietism should be more central than it is in contemporary accounts of the history of Protestantism [pietism is defined here both narrowly (Pietism) as a constellation of individual religious traditions and generally (pietism) as a widespread, pan-Protestant theological ethos that came into its own after the Enlightenment].³⁰ Accordingly, for Glomsrud, the following proposition is historically defensible (although it requires further elaboration): it is quite possible that eighteenth-century pietism was the crucial link between Anabaptist theological perspectives of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and nineteenth-century Protestant liberalism or mediating theology, which then became the crucial context for the life and thought of Karl Barth.³¹ On this view, mediating

in statu confessionis, see the Formula of Concord-Epistome, Article X, 6.

²⁸ McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern*, p. 16.

²⁹ One example is Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

³⁰ For a pre-history of mediating theology, see Fred Lieburg, ed., *Confessionalism and Pietism: Religious Reform in Early Modern Europe* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2006).

³¹ For two brief synopses of the process of deconfessionalization in Switzerland see Martin I. Klauber,

theology is glossed as an *ecclesiastical* version of pietism, in other words a pietism that remained *within* de-confessionalized churches rather than on the fringes where they tended to operate in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³² Many of Barth's students continue to downplay the mediated nature of his reception-and-transmission of the tradition. Given recent post-Reformation scholarship, however, we should, according to Glomsrud, at least hold open the possibility that *the way in which* he acquired a working knowledge of Reformed theology in some sense circumvented his coming to terms with the confessional tradition, a point which ought to modify our understanding of his relationship to Protestant liberalism. As historians of doctrine, we must entertain the possibility that our theologized approach to the life and thought of Karl Barth has sometimes obscured more than it has revealed. In an attempt to move beyond existing interpretive models, Glomsrud's historiographical reconstruction takes into account both the initial recovery of the tradition via nineteenth-century textbooks and the monumental importance of nineteenth-century pietist theology as the dominant intellectual-ecclesiastical context of the day. His interpretation identifies Barth as a grand and inventive mediating theologian who culminated the nineteenth-century tradition of de-confessionalized pan-Protestant theology. In some places, according to Glomsrud, this means reading Barth against the grain of his rhetoric, but in others it allows his personal voice to be genuinely heard for the first time.

An example of this is the fact that Barth did not set out to become a Reformed theologian; rather he became well acquainted with Calvin and the tradition because of his honorary professorship and he did so by emphasizing the divine initiative in a way that did indeed make his association with Calvin inevitable even though he was Calvin's "free pupil". This was also qualified by the fact that Barth was to teach theology at Göttingen not as "confessional" theology but as a "theological discipline like any other". Barth resisted being labelled a Reformed theologian and preferred being identified as a Christian or Dogmatic theologian. Barth hesitated to occupy a specifically confessional position.

If Barth's theological relationship to the tradition suggests a kind of Radical Zwinglianism, then, according to Glomsrud, we might ask where this is evident in his early theology. More than anything, Barth's *actualism* (his dynamic view of being and time) may be construed as a load-bearing beam upon which a non-foundationalist system of theology was constructed; this ontology became the source and rationale for an active, ever-revising theology that can (and must!) be verbalized but is only containable with difficulty in a steady and abiding human word.³³ Spread across various *loci*, the *actualist* elements of even this early "pneumatocentric" phase of Barth's development, as it has been characterized by McCormack, can be highlighted in relation to a number of perennial motifs in Radical Protestantism.³⁴ This is perhaps most clear in Barth's doctrines of revelation, election, sacraments, and ecclesiology.

While Barth did indeed turn theologians back to classical themes, his view of scripture was quite different from the traditional Reformed one in that for him the Word was distinct from the Bible as the act of God that had to take place in given circumstances. His account of revelatory actualism parallels in a number of curious ways the Anabaptist/pietist rhetoric of *punctiliar immediacy* on the one hand and of revelation as an *unmediated direct event* on the other. According to Glomsrud, there is in the 1920's a kind of *pneumatological occasionalism* at work in the *moment by moment* occurrence of revelation, and this is *especially* the case in the Christian's experience of election or reprobation. Instead of categorizing Barth as Reformed because of his emphasis on the divine initiative and his view of double predestination, Glomsrud defines Barth's appropriation of mediated pre-critical theology more precisely in terms of his unique combination of an Augustinian "sovereignty" impulse with an industrial strength emphasis on the dynamic operation of the Spirit. In Glomsrud's view, Barth's actualism at this stage does indeed make him an occasionalist, even though some might try to extricate Barth from that charge by appealing to God's constancy. He prefers to argue that Barth's thinking does not dismiss occasionalism as much as it accepts it and offers assurances that, in God's case, revelatory, soteriological,

"Confessions, Creeds, and Catechisms in Swiss Reformed Theology (1675-1734)", *Westminster Theological Journal* 57 (1995); "Jean-Alphonse Turretini and the Abrogation of the Formula Consensus in Geneva", *Westminster Theological Journal* 53 (1991), pp.325-38.

³² The best example of early "deconfessionalization" is explored in Martin Klauber, *Between Reformed Scholasticism and Pan-Protestantism: Jean-Alphonse Turretin (1671-1737) and Enlightened Orthodoxy at the Academy of Geneva* (London: Associated University Presses, 1994).

³³ George Hunsinger offers the standard definition of the term. "'Actualism'" is the motif which governs Barth's complex conception of being and time. Being is always an event and often an act" (George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 4). See also Colin E. Gunton, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of Election as Part of his Doctrine of God", *Journal of Theological Studies* 25:2 (1974), pp. 381-392.

³⁴ Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909-1936* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 327ff. (hereafter *CRDT*).

and ethical occasionalism will work for our good rather than our harm. Barth refused to think of God in static terms as the prisoner of his own decision for a fixed number of elect and reprobate.

Even if the occasionalist and “voluntarist element” did *not* consistently dominate Barth’s thinking across the system (as Biggar and Paul Nimmo argue), there persisted a “form of . . . immediacy” like many post-Kantian theories wherein revelation is defined, in Colin Gunton’s words, as a “function of an *immediate* relation of God to humanity.”³⁵ Curiously, Matthias Gockel has recently called this Göttingen treatment a “Schleiermacherian reconstruction,” and in this Glomsrud believes is correct.³⁶ What is missing in his analysis, however, according to Glomsrud, is careful reflection on Barth’s relationship to Schleiermacher via Heppe and especially Schweizer. With respect to his revised view of election then, the dynamic-actualist element is precisely what produced the “rent in the cloak” of Barth’s orthodoxy and led him to theological reconstruction. As he put it, “I for my part am fully aware that it is no secondary matter if I deviate here but that it will have the most far-reaching consequences.”³⁷ Barth’s instincts were probably on target when he further supposed that these were revisions for which he would have “surely been beaten with rods in old-time Geneva”.³⁸

With respect to his eucharistic theology the later Barth came to think that Zwingli was right, although he himself was not specifically relying on Zwingli but instead was attempting to understand him better than he understood himself toward a “Neo-Zwinglian” position (CD IV/4, 130). He thus moved away from Calvin’s “sacramentalism”. The recurring elements of “neo-Zwinglianism” were fostered in part – and perhaps unconsciously – by nineteenth-century theology and constructive historiography, especially when his own theology pushed away from the general Eucharistic consensus and towards a hyper-Zwinglian and radical pietist formulation of how God works through creaturely means.³⁹ As Michael Horton has argued, Barth’s eucharistic theology

intensified and radicalized the Zwinglian “antithesis between the visible and invisible, sign and reality.”⁴⁰ Similar difficulties afflict Barth’s view of the Church as a human organization that only becomes the Church when the miracle of God’s speaking and human hearing occurs. In Glomsrud’s estimation, the human-historical Church of Esau is the sign and the remote “thing-signified” is the Church of Jacob understood as an “eschatological event” for Barth. With this particular sacramental and ecclesiological formulation, Glomsrud concludes that a spiritualizing approach to theological tradition and confessional authority must be the inevitable and perhaps even predictable result.

Glomsrud concluded with a proposal and a thesis. His proposal was that there should be a temporary suspension of belief in the “Calvin against the Calvinists” caricature of the post-Reformation Reformed tradition that is latent in a good deal of modern Protestant theology. This is a straw-man that has functioned well because it enables various mediating theologians to maintain their Reformed connection while dismissing the confessional orthodox tradition. While there is awareness that Barth attempted to rehabilitate classical Protestant theology over against some nineteenth-century thought, this seems to leave contemporary theology too far removed from the actual development of theology and church traditions in history. The question remains, therefore, how historians of doctrine can do justice to Barth’s theological course correction in the 1920s, his reconstruction of a version of theology that was *relatively more in line with classical motifs, formulas, and modes of expression*, while also coming to terms with his theological identity in relation to pietism, liberalism, and modernity. In so many ways, Barth did veer back in the direction of classical Reformed theology. But it is also possible that his shift to “the right,” so to speak, his gesture towards “orthodoxy,” was a movement *that began and ended within pietism and liberalism*. It seems unlikely to Glomsrud that Barth can represent a third, spiritualized option between orthodoxy (caricatured as of the dead letter) and pietism (caricatured as exclusively anthropocentric and Pelagian or at best semi-Pelagian).

In Glomsrud’s judgment, the mainstream “Protestantism” that survives today is not simply the extension of Reformation Protestantism *under the conditions of modernity*, but a new tradition entirely. Therefore, the process by which many Barth scholars qualify their relationship to the orthodox tradition firmly situates them *both historically and theologically* within this new tradition that continues to be fueled by the potent mixing and remixing of Radical insights-and-emphases with

³⁵ Colin Gunton, *A Brief Theology of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark), pp. 3-4. See also Paul Nimmo, *Being in Action: The Theological Shape of Barth’s Ethical Vision* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark), p. 19.

³⁶ Matthias Gockel, *Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election: A Systematic-Theological Companion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 156.

³⁷ Barth, *GD*, p. 453.

³⁸ Barth, *GD*, p. 543.

³⁹ See B.A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress press, 1993), pp. 84ff; see also Michael S. Horton, *People and Place: A Covenantal Ecclesiology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), pp. 40ff.

⁴⁰ See Michael S. Horton, “Apostolicity”, a paper delivered at the Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference (Summer 2009).

magisterial-Reformation modes of discourse. The vast majority of post-Enlightenment Protestants, according to Glomsrud, regardless of their theological “conservatism” or “liberalism,” fall into this diverse and malleable pietist tradition. Only afterwards do they seek to maintain their Reformation *bona fides* by appealing to the spirit of Calvin’s intentions over against the “dead-letter” of the tradition to which Calvin belonged.

Building on this thesis Glomsrud believes we might construct a new historiographical model that is better attuned to these post-Confessional developments; in other words, we should work to be more attentive to the history of *Vermittlungstheologie*. With this, we will be better equipped to narrate the history of Protestant *traditions* and recognize Barth’s entirely unique brand of constructive theology as the installment of a brilliant and independent third or fourth generation mediating theologian.

“Peace and War among the Orthodox and Modern”

James J. Buckley

Loyola College, Baltimore

After extending apologies to George Hunsinger and to Bruce McCormack for being unable to attend the meeting, Buckley’s remarks opened with a statement that he was honored when Bruce called them “good friends” in one of his footnotes (109, note 1). They became good friends when Buckley spent some time in Princeton a few years ago. He noted that he vividly recalled Bruce jammed into the shotgun seat of his Tercel, knees almost tucked under his chin, as they drove home on many evenings, discussing and debating Barth, Hans Frei’s reading of Barth, and George Lindbeck’s postliberal theology. Here Buckley learned that Bruce’s positions arose as an answer to deeply thought out questions – and, most importantly, his questions arose out of serious listening. His positions taken in this book arise out of serious questions, and serious listening to those who criticize and/or support those positions.

Buckley notes that *Orthodox and Modern. Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* is an interesting, learned, and provocative set of essays, all written after McCormack’s 1995 magisterial study of the genesis of Barth’s theology. Here, according to Buckley, we find re-readings of Barth’s relationship to nineteenth century Reformed theology, arguments with contemporary postliberal and postmodern readings of Barth in Germany and the United States, and explication of Barth’s theological epistemology and ontology (including the “modest correction” to McCormack’s own 1995 reading of Barth [pp. 262ff]).

There are many hooks here for intellectual historians, theologians, and philosophers to absorb, think about, and debate. While Buckley intends to raise three questions he also acknowledges that McCormack may, of course, disagree with the questions or the answers. But his questions are not “gotcha!” questions. Instead, Buckley hopes to open up another path for conversation to complement those McCormack and others have already placed on the table.

First, McCormack invites us to think about his essays under a thesis: “what Barth was doing, in the end, was seeking to understand what it means to be orthodox *under the conditions of modernity*” (pp. 17, 232). This is a puzzling thesis. If the terms of a debate are (in the title of the book) “orthodox and modern,” wouldn’t it be better (more dialectical, let’s say) to claim that we need to understand what it means to be modern under the conditions of orthodoxy as well as orthodox under the conditions of modernity – and then debate which (orthodox and modern, or modern and orthodox) is prior *relative to particular topics*? Whence the impetus to think relatively undialectically on this issue? What is this “in the end”?

Buckley answers his own question – and then asks McCormack if he agrees. The answer, Buckley thinks, is that McCormack’s essays have both an irenic as well as a polemical side.

The more irenic side goes like this. “Orthodox” means, according to McCormack, theology normed by Scripture, confessed by a church whose conflicts are fallibly adjudicated by “a synod of true bishops” (p. 15). “Modern” means historically conscious (p. 10) in a way that rejects (or no longer “respects”) classical metaphysics and old Aristotelian-biblical cosmology, is shaped by Kant’s epistemological limits as well as early romanticism like Herder and Hamann – but sits looser on evolutionary science and nonfoundationalism (p. 11). The key participants in this orthodox and modern conversation include Schleiermacher and Hegel, those like Kierkegaard and J.T. Beck whom Barth characterized as “outsiders” (p. 11), and last but certainly not least Barth. It is a distinctively but not exclusively Reformed conversation. McCormack seemingly aims here for peace – a self-critical peace, but peace nonetheless. For example, speaking of Alexander Schweizer as Schleiermacher’s most gifted student, McCormack plausibly says that “Barth’s theology did not constitute a simple repudiation of his ‘neo-Protestant’ forebear [sic] but rather the fulfillment of many of his deepest concerns in a new framework” (p. 42), and he pleads for dialogue between “these two most vital streams within the Reformed tradition” (p. 61). McCormack even argues for a construal of Barth as mediating theologian (pp. 31, 37, 39), showing the truth of the aphorism that any theology that can be put in a nutshell (“mediating

theology”) deserves to be there.⁴¹ The peace McCormack seeks here is, of course, a self-critical peace – the disagreements between a Barth and a Schleiermacher, and a Schweitzer remain – but “in a new framework.” One helpful feature of McCormack’s essays is the way he embeds disputes over the exegesis of Barth’s writings in this distinctively Reformed tradition in modernity.

And this quest for self-critical peace, according to Buckley, is important not simply for the Reformed tradition but for Catholic and Orthodox as well. The Barth/neo-Protestant divide has Orthodox and Catholic versions as well, such as the Orthodox debates over theologians like Bulgakov and Lossky, or Catholic disputes over theologians like Balthasar and Rahner. If McCormack is right about the Reformed living together in self-critical peace, it is Buckley’s wish that Catholics and Orthodox were this far along.

So one layer is this intra-Reformed conversation into which McCormack invites us all in this book. But there is another conversation. It turns out by book’s end that students of Barth are now divided. McCormack’s helpful introduction to the 2006 German translation of his 1995 book speaks of “two rival camps” of Barth interpretation, one more Catholic and at home in the tradition and the other more faithful to Barth and more at home in the modern world (p. 295). Elsewhere in this volume he says that “[t]he new orthodoxy is Orthodox and Catholic in its inspiration” – and here he includes theologians from Jenson and Lindbeck to Milbank and Hauerwas (p. 230)! And on the very first page he even draws Hans Frei into the conversation, contrasting Eberhard Jüngel’s reading of Barth and Frei’s “neo-orthodox” Barth (nuanced on p. 115 [note 13]). One definition of neo-orthodoxy (McCormack does not offer this definition) might be that the neo-orthodox intend to be modern only “under the conditions of orthodoxy” – the reverse of the hermeneutical rule McCormack here proposes for interpreting Barth.

How tightly is McCormack’s thesis for these admittedly wide-ranging essays thus bound up with this anti-thesis? Could we at least agree that the thesis might be true of some issues but not others? It might be true, for example, relative to more particular issues, most particularly (to name the issues McCormack takes up in this book) about the mutual logical priority of trinity and election but also

about the Chalcedonian *hypostasis* and *phuses*, as well as deification and participation. Or does McCormack really wish to propose, as a necessary and sufficient rule for interpreting Barth “what Barth was doing, in the end, was seeking to understand what it means to be orthodox *under the conditions of modernity*” (pp. 17, 232)?

Buckley raises two other questions. In relation to McCormack’s understanding of historical consciousness as indicative of modernity, Buckley thinks Frei’s Barth was out to un-do or re-locate modern theology’s preoccupation with consciousness (including knowledge), historical or not. The eclipse of biblical narrative is in part about “consciousness,” in at least some of its many senses. But it is more importantly an eclipse of renderings of human beings as agents embedded and journeying in a physical, social, and historical world – christologically normed, of course, for Frei. Agents are not (or not only) the unchanging substances of at least ancient metaphysics.⁴² But neither are they (or not only) the subjects of modern consciousness. In any case, it is this notion of historically embodied agency (among other things) that Buckley believes Frei saw emerging as Barth moved from the focus on Revelation in *CD* volume I, through volume II, in volume III, tentatively climaxing in the Christology of volume IV – a veritable sublation (preservation and transcendence)⁴³ of modern theology’s hyper-preoccupation with consciousness and knowledge.

Buckley does not think Frei would have said that the triune God’s or Jesus’ or our own agency (as McCormack says of historical consciousness) was “most basic” to modern theology. Rather, he would have sat looser to what some like Charles Taylor call our “multiple modernities,” including those modernities for whom historical consciousness is most basic. Buckley is not sure of how strong a contrast to draw between McCormack and Frei on this contrast of “consciousness” and “agency” – but he would like to hear McCormack’s comment on this contrast.

For Buckley, then the contrast of Frei and McCormack (and their Barths) on this is not absolute. There is a feature of Frei’s theology that is much closer to

⁴¹ See James Buckley’s understanding of some different senses of “mediating theology,” in “Roger Haight’s Mediating Christology,” *Modern Theology* 23 (2007) 107-112. Buckley alludes to Barth at a couple of points; he is and in some ways is not a practitioner of *Vermittlungstheologie* (which Buckley, following Frei, understands to be most centrally a theology that employs what Haight calls “an apologetical method”).

⁴² Unpacking this thought would require contrasting Frei’s and McCormack’s understandings of what it might mean to be “postmetaphysical.” McCormack’s “actualism” sometimes contrasts “acts” and “substances/essences”. But why can’t an agent be a (changing) substance? This is the background for Frei’s interest in Austin Farrer’s philosophical theology.

⁴³ What Buckley means concretely is that Barth, after focusing on Jesus’ being-in-act-in-history-on-our-behalf in *CD* IV/1 and IV/2, returns to Revelation and knowledge (and therefore to Anselm, however briefly) in *CD* IV/3. The veritable oxymoron “sublation” is surely an overly simplistic way to describe what happens here.

McCormack than some might think. When Frei re-published the essay originally entitled *The Mystery of the Presence of Jesus Christ as The Identity of Jesus Christ*, Frei proposed that, besides intention-action descriptions, there are also self-manifestation descriptions (pp. 44, 91, 94–101, and chapter 12) – descriptions of what Gilbert Ryle once called “the elusive I” who cannot be rendered by any narrative of characters and circumstances, the Jesus self-manifested most dramatically at the transfiguration and resurrection. It is this subject who can only be and be known in the dialectic of veiling and unveiling that Frei would also say is an important part (perhaps even, as McCormack proposes, the center [pp. 81–85, 110–112, 175]) of Barth’s “transfoundational” epistemology of revelation.

However, in the preface that marked the transition from the essay originally entitled “The Mystery of the Presence of Jesus Christ” to the book now entitled “The Identity of Jesus Christ,” Frei came to think he had overplayed the concept of “presence” ingredient in self-manifestation descriptions. Frei wrote that “in the concept of ‘presence’ I was trying to sum up what all its variants had in common. It was ‘Kant’s transcendental ego, transformed into idealistic subjectivity or romantic consciousness, and heightened to the point of a unique perspective on self, others, and the universe at large’” (*Identity*, p. viii). Most of Frei’s students have quietly dropped this moment of Frei’s theology, perhaps agreeing with Ron Thiemann many years ago that such descriptions are dispensable, once we have narratively embedded intention-action descriptions (*Revelation and Theology*, p. 182 [note I]). But McCormack’s and Frei’s Barth never abandoned such descriptions.

So the second question for McCormack is: why is “[self-manifesting] historical consciousness” more basic and more modern than “historical [narratively embedded] agency”?

Buckley also has a third question that relates to the third part of the book where Barth’s theological ontology is discussed. In this section the centerpiece of the tension between orthodox and modern becomes acute with one reading of Barth more accommodated to the tradition and the other more toward modernity. It is here that Bruce re-publishes his *Cambridge Companion* essay that argued that Barth’s theology of Jesus Christ as not only the object but also the subject of election implies (or should have implied) that the incarnation of the Son and the outpouring of the Spirit are not economic events grounded in an inaccessible (essentialist, substantialist) immanent trinity (p. 191). Instead, “the triunity of God” is “logically, a function of divine election” (pp. 194, 218, 266). It is here, Buckley observes, that we also find McCormack’s response to critics like van Driel and Molnar, climaxing with a request that “we dial down the temperature of this debate again” (277).

To this end, Buckley distinguishes three layers of this controversy, while addressing only one of them. First, there is an historical issue of the role of election in Calvin and Reformed theology more generally, particularly after Alexander Schweizer’s nineteenth century reading of the history of Reformed theology on election. Buckley found McCormack’s chapter on this issue one of the most interesting in the book – and would love to hear what historians of Reformed theology say about his reading.

Second, McCormack concedes that Barth is not consistent on this issue, even after the basic decisions were made in II/2. We need exegetical work on the texts of Barth to show and correct inconsistencies (p. 275) – and McCormack cites folks who have begun this work. Without pursuing the exegetical issue here, Buckley notes that he is so far persuaded by George Hunsinger’s exegetical counter-argument in the April 2008 issue of *Modern Theology* – admitting that he has yet to study the other secondary sources McCormack cites on this issue.

A third issue concerns the following question: why is it important to McCormack that election logically precede trinity? Are there any reasons – reasons different from what Barth and the Reformed tradition say, consistently or inconsistently? Here is Buckley’s worry.

It seems to him that the God who elects to be triune is the self-manifesting subject who eludes cumulative narratives of character and circumstance. This is the God whom McCormack once or twice characterizes as “an unsublatable subject” (p. 111, note 7). Now to the extent that Frei never abandoned a role for self-manifestation descriptions, he might sympathize more with what McCormack is contending than some of McCormack’s critics. But sympathy would be as far as things could go, for McCormack’s Electing Subject sounds – or, at least, sounds to Buckley – very like what Frei called “Kant’s transcendental ego, transformed into idealistic subjectivity or romantic consciousness, and heightened to the point of a unique perspective on self, others, and the universe at large.” Hence, Frei’s insistence on unsublatable narratives of character and circumstance as the context for self-manifestation, never tempted him to find a divine I behind the biblical narratives of the triune God. (By such narratives Buckley means, for example, the way Barth read the Bible as a whole in IV/4, pp. 95 – 100.) This, in fact, is one of the ingredients of characterizing God as mystery – not (or not only) that God eludes narrative description like other subjects but also that God is no mere subject or agent (or substance). God remains (in Gerard Manley Hopkins’ phrase) “abidingly interesting,” fascinating in holiness and grace.

In the page quoted earlier where McCormack asks us to “dial down the temperature,” he insists that, while he is

raising a question that has never been taken up by a church council and “[n]o question of orthodoxy hangs on the answers given” (p. 277), Buckley has here raised more questions about how to be “modern” than how to be “orthodox” – these three questions are one and only one of the conditions for arguments over orthodoxy. Does McCormack really wish to propose that Barth simply wants us to ask about being orthodox “under the conditions of modernity” and not also the reverse? Insofar as modernity is one of the conditions of theology, why center on “historical consciousness” rather than “narratively embedded agency”? And what distinguishes the electing subject of the trinity from the very modern self-manifesting, unsublatable “I”?

After Mark Husbands, Hope College read Jim Buckley’s paper, Paul Molnar, St. John’s University read a paper he had written in response to a request from *Theology Today* to review *Orthodox and Modern*. This paper was published in the April issue of *Theology Today* and so it will not be reprinted here. This paper was read in place of a paper that Michael Root was unable to present. There was a lively and interesting discussion of many issues following presentation of these papers.

Book Reviews

Theology as Conversation. The Significance of Dialogue in Historical and Contemporary Theology. A Festschrift for Daniel L. Migliore. BRUCE L. MCCORMACK and KIMLYN J. BENDER, eds. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009. Pp. v + 362. \$50.00.

There will undoubtedly be a good many readers of the Society newsletter who have learned and/or taught Christian theology with the help of Daniel Migliore’s textbook, *Faith Seeking Understanding*. It was in regular circulation in classrooms at the Toronto School of Theology when I was a student there, and it’s clear, engaging and substantive presentation of the central themes of Christian doctrine was widely appreciated. Among the distinctives of that book were, of course, the appendices which presented imagined dialogues on natural theology, politics and the resurrection between various theologians, some named (Barth, Niebuhr, Moltmann, Rahner) and others typical (an ecumenist, a feminist etc.). That the contours and stakes of theological debate are sharpened through forthright and respectful exchange has been a conviction which has marked Migliore’s lifework. And it is this characteristic of his

writing and teaching which provides the organizing theme for this beautifully produced volume, published to mark his retirement from Princeton Theological Seminary in 2009. The editors group the twenty essays contributed by friends, colleagues, and former students under three headings, the respective themes reflect the emphases of Migliore’s own work over the years. The first section concerns “Engagements with the Theology of Karl Barth”, and it is here that the editors also offer their own contributions. For the readers of this Newsletter, I will dwell at greater length upon the chapters of this section.

Bender’s lead chapter concerns the theological ideas of scripture and canon. Moving from insights gained from the famous Barth-Harnack exchange of 1923, Bender comes to formulate three dogmatic theses for consideration, theses which assert that (p. 1) canon is fundamentally a theological, and only subsequently an historical category; (p. 2) ingredient in the idea of canon is a strong affirmation of the unity of the scriptures; and (p. 3) the question of the constitution of the canon is to be adjudged christologically, and should concentrate on its center, rather than police its peripheries. Indeed, Bender argues, no doubt correctly, that the dispute between Barth and Harnack over the canon is in fact symptomatic of a more fundamental dispute over Christology itself.

Gerhard Sauter instructs us concerning the decisive contexts within which to consider Barth’s sharp dispute with Brunner over natural theology. In a brief span, he illuminates the setting of this debate within the Church Struggle and the wider history of neo-Protestantism. In this context, Barth was centrally worried to mark the crucial connection between “the true church and theological decisions” (p. 37). His repudiation of natural theology amidst this crisis, however, left many aspects of its problematic dangerously unanalyzed in Sauter’s view, and the essay notes several of these for readers’ consideration, making particular reference to recent work on Thomas Aquinas. For all that, Sauter is keen for readers to feel the continuing force of Barth’s claim that theology ought not to go in for many tasks, but rather “just the *one* task all the more!” (p. 47).

McCormack revisits another debate, which took place in the late 1960s between Gollwitzer and Jüngel over the nature of properly evangelical talk of God. McCormack argues that despite his intention to “limit responsible talk of God to the God who has entered into a covenanted relation with the individual in Christ (the God *pro me*)” (p. 55), Gollwitzer finally acceded to the need to speak of God in his aseity, in line with the tradition of substance metaphysics. Jüngel, in *God’s Being is in Becoming*, works to avoid this relapse by a reading of Barth which takes seriously the implications of the christology of CD IV, under whose strictures “one can only posit in God the ontological conditions which make

possible this Christology” (p. 62). McCormack goes on to press Jüngel’s line—which itself admits a certain ambiguity—into sharper focus yet, leading to the provocative conclusion that “it is not the doctrine of the Trinity *as such* which provides the hermeneutical foundation of the whole of the *Church Dogmatics*, but (after II/2) it is the triunity of God understood in terms of the *determination* given to it in the eternal act of election” (p. 65). No doubt there will be many who will be keen to continue a forthright and respectful dialogue over the issues at stake here!

Gerit Neven’s contribution introduces an Anglophone audience to the work of Hans-Georg Geyer. The essays set out to show how, moving from theological commitments regarding the coming of God in Christ inspired by Barth, Geyer was able to engage fruitfully with a range of modern continental philosophy generally, and with Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt School of critical theory in particular. Central in these exchanges are issues of anthropology, emancipatory politics and the crucial role played by both memory and hope in negotiating ethical life humanely under the conditions of modernity. As with Jüngel, Geyer aimed to press home certain theological impulses of Barth’s in order to escape the “captivity of metaphysics” and the politics correlated to it. Readers intrigued by these themes, but unfamiliar with Geyer will find much of interest here, and Geyer’s commitment to thinking that “our time is an implication of the *parousia* of Jesus Christ” (p. 70) surely honors the permanent provocation which the gospel represents to all political and ethical thought.

The relationship between Sobrino and Barth on the theme of natural theology is insightfully explored in the essay by Matthew Lundberg. His aim is to discover what, in a post-colonial context, theology can learn from their related, yet distinct, critiques. For Barth, the critique of natural theology is motivated positively as an epistemic implication of *sola gratia*, and negatively by its unwelcome global anthropological and Christological corollaries. Natural theology is then a casualty of Barth’s commitment to acknowledge that the world, and humanity in it, simply does not exist *extra Christum*. Supportive in part, Sobrino however considers Barth’s view dangerously abstract in its universal register. His own criticism is motivated differently: natural theology is attacked as a species of *theologia gloriae*, which illegitimately privileges “what is *positive* in history” as indicative of God (p. 91). Natural theology is a mode of historical sin, in which the notion of deity is idolatrously deployed in the interests of human self-legitimation with odious ethical and political consequences. Lundberg considers whether Sobrino’s invocation of the theological significance of the experience of the suffering of the poor doesn’t amount itself to a kind of natural theology—by means of discrete *analogia historiae*—but concludes that he ultimately avoids this by the force with

which he orders all theological epistemology to the primacy of the cross.

Cynthia Rigby contributes a winsome chapter on the theology of play to round out this first section. It explores the kind of dialogue Barth and Moltmann might have had over the latter’s treatment of this theme in a relatively neglected 1971 essay. Rigby constructs Barth’s contribution from his reflections on Mozart, and more substantively from *CD* III/4, where the idea of play is considered in the discussion of the ethics of labor. For both theologians, play is a fitting characterization of human activity, not because such activity is frivolous, but rather because it occurs firmly within the sphere of the sovereignty of divine grace. Understood in this way, “play” denotes that kind of humane activity which arises from the salutary grace of God and which befits those whose lives are determined and directed thereby. What follows from this, Rigby argues, is a view of human labor which at once deflates the importance of such human activity—as provisional in the face of God’s sovereignty—while also assigning it “eternal significance” as the first fruits of God’s sovereign, salutary work (p. 115). Readers intrigued by these reflections might also wish to revisit Barth’s discussion of art and play within the “ethics of redemption” which forms the final part of his Münster / Bonn cycle of ethics lectures.

The middle section of the volume offers a wealth of essays in “Conversation with Traditional Theological Topics”. I cannot do justice to the substance of these here, but note briefly their central concerns. Dawn DeVries’ detailed and provocative discussion of Schleiermacher’s account of orthodoxy, heresy and heterodoxy, and defense of the productive character of the latter within the life of the church, is followed by George Hunsinger’s examination of H.R. Niebuhr’s *The Meaning of Revelation*. While appreciating its theological anthropology and confessional, non-apologetic tone, Hunsinger adjudges its christology and theology markedly deficient from a Nicene standpoint. George Newlands’ engaging and witty chapter is similarly concerned to interrogate a discrete tract of the tradition, in his case the way in which the hand of Luther has moved, often unacknowledged, Reformed theology in important ways.

Thomas Thompson works to vindicate Moltmann against accusations that he has no adequate account of the immanent Trinity, arguing that in fact after *The Crucified God*, Moltmann consistently acknowledges the propriety of this doctrine, and expands its place in his own thought in clear and demonstrable ways. Consideration of Moltmann’s theology continues in David Bryant’s comparison of his and McFague’s differing, yet equally serious, attempts to motivate ecological responsibility by way of a theology of creation. And Moltmann himself contributes a delightfully constructed dialogue between “grace” and “faith” aimed to call out key theological

issues and, finally, to acknowledge the utter primacy of grace, to which faith is bound to confess, “I owe everything to you” (p. 240). Kathleen Billman also uses the form of an imagined dialogue to explore the emerging “third spaces” within which contemporary theological identities are being formed across confessional and institutional lines. Stephen Sell undertakes a sustained conversation with Gary Badcock and Lee Hardy in order to discern the prospects for a theological account of vocation which more effectively connects the general call to faith with the particular circumstances of life in a time within which the traditional notions have become, as he says, “virtually incoherent” (p. 245).

Gregory Anderson Love critically examines a range of recent attempts to provide “non-violent” theories of atonement, and finds in the end that if the valorization of violence is truly to be eschewed *and* the essential role of Jesus affirmed, then we need a view of the cross which has not only disclosive, but also ontological, “world-altering force” (p. 213). Kate Sonderegger offers a supple set of remarks on the locus of “the people of God”, arguing that its significance is best appreciated when acknowledged as “an eschatological category above all else” (p. 216). Reflecting on the place of “the people of God” in Augustine’s *City of God*, the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium*, and forms of mediaeval Christendom, Sonderegger connects the category firmly with the “secular”, understood as “the earthly age set under the age of Christ” set within a view of the world determined by “the finality of Christ and the finality of God’s gifts” (pp. 225, 223).

The final section of the book collects four chapters which consider theology’s “Dialogue with Society and Culture”. Here, Cornelius Plantinga Jr. warmly recommends the virtues of wide literary reading to those who labor to preach the gospel, both as a source of “middle wisdom” and rhetorical *exempla*. John Stewart reminds readers of the extensive and shifting contributions Charles Hodge made to 19th century debates about slavery and emancipation, sketching a portrait of the Princeton scholar as a “public theologian” not easily won from reading of his *Systematic Theology* alone. In two related essays, Michael Welker and David Fergusson consider the role of Christian faith and theology in the wide sphere of cultural and public life. Recommending a view of theology’s task as the cultivation of “canonical memory”, Welker identifies a “top ten list” of pressing themes for contemporary theology—ranging from the doctrine of creation, through sin, the cross, pneumatology and the complex of “law and spirit”—engaging with which, Christians can presently marshal the multivalent “weight” of their traditions in the service of wider cultural debates. Fergusson surveys the debate concerning the propriety and validity of theological discourse in public debate,

and argues that explicitly Christian contributions are not antithetical to democratic norms. Rather, the church’s task in this forum is to make “a distinctive public contribution without aspiring to a position of social control or dominance”, since “the faith is spread by the free action of the Holy Spirit and not by political coercion” (pp. 324-5).

All these essays, each in their own way, work to reflect the virtues of the theologian in whose honor they are penned, a man, as the editors observe in their preface, “of great personal integrity, always a bridge-builder and reconciler among colleagues, an elder statesman whose wisdom is valued by all” and known for open-handed hospitality (p. xii). It is a rich and varied collection, the quality of which redounds to Daniel Migliore’s legacy as a scholar and teacher of theologians and pastors.

Philip G. Ziegler
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Participation in Christ: An Entry into Karl Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*. By Adam Neder. Columbia Series in Reformed Theology, (Louisville, KY: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 2009). Pp. vii + 135. \$24.95.

In this work Adam Neder, Associate professor at Whitworth University, has two stated primary goals: first, to “elucidate and analyze Barth’s understanding of participation” and second, to “show that this theme is not a late development in Barth’s thought” (p. xii). In the course of his study Neder highlights Barth’s actualistic christology and his corresponding actualistic anthropology. In addition, Neder argues that Barth develops his account of human participation as having an objective (*de jure*) and subjective (*de facto*) element in which God’s prior reality and command grounds and establishes the corresponding human obedience. While Neder’s argument might not seem overly controversial, his acumen in treating his topic through the breadth of the *Church Dogmatics* makes his sketch a valuable addition to the literature on Barth and represents a clear and scholarly presentation of an important and often overlooked aspect of Barth’s thought.

Among Neder’s various accomplishments is his ability to skillfully navigate dense material in an accessible and thorough manner in so brief a sketch (92 pages without endnotes). While one could point out that there corresponds to this strength a potential weakness, namely, that Neder is unable to examine many of the tangential discussions that arise, and that Neder must of necessity treat some complex and nuanced areas with undue brevity, I believe that the strength of Neder’s focus and succinctness far outweighs any corresponding weakness.

Neder begins his study with his explication of Barth's understanding of participation in the "Event of Union with Christ" as outlined in Barth's doctrine of the Word of God, specifically paragraphs 5, "The Nature of the Word of God" and 6, "The Knowability of the Word of God". In these two paragraphs he traces Barth's understanding of the event of God's self-revelation and concludes, "The union between Christ and believers, their mutual indwelling, happens as an event of the divine lordship and corresponding human obedience" (p. 14). In emphasizing the "event" character of both divine revelation and human correspondence, Neder draws attention to Barth's actualistic Christology. In addition, he correctly points out that just as divine lordship and "corresponding human obedience" are neither confused, nor wholly separated, so too does Barth develop the objective and subjective elements of human participation with neither confusion nor separation.

Next, Neder elucidates participation in Barth's doctrine of God, particularly paragraphs 32, "The Problem of the Correct Doctrine of the Election of Grace" and 36, "The Election of Jesus Christ". In this chapter, possibly Neder's strongest, he skillfully maneuvers Barth's dense doctrine of election and argues that Barth's understanding of participation entails an objective (*de jure*) as well as a subjective (*de facto*) element and that "De Jure participation in Christ does not exclude or replace the action of individual human beings. Rather, it establishes a trajectory for humanity, defining humanity by giving it a telos. In this way, the objective reality of the being of humanity in Christ includes within itself, establishes, and guarantees genuine human subjectivity" (p. 18). In turn, Neder responds to the common criticism that Barth is unable to posit a meaningful subjective reality or human action when he concludes that for Barth, "objective participation in Christ is a substitutionary reality" (p. 23). Neder sees that for Barth the objective reality of the election of Christ grounds and sustains subjective human participation and action. Neder keenly observes that this grounding takes the form of "repetition" and "perseverance" rather than "progress" so that for Barth human participation in Christ has the effect of working toward rather than away from sustained and meaningful ethical action.

From here Neder discusses the participatory nature of Barth's anthropology in § 44.3, "The Real Man" and highlights the continuity in Barth's development of participation between volumes II and III. In connection with Barth's anthropology Neder expounds Barth's understanding of history as well as Barth's rejection of "substantialist understandings of human nature" (p. 30) in favor of an actualistic model. A highlight of this chapter is Neder's brief discussion of "Sin as Nonbeing" in which he notes that Barth's response to questions regarding human sin would likely "proceed from the starting point of the distinction between objective and

subjective participation in Christ" (p. 36). Here he sees that for Barth, "human beings are not always who they really are, and therefore they *are* not", or perhaps more precisely: "When a person fails to offer this free obedience, she contradicts her own being and she ceases to be in herself who she really is in Christ" (p. 36). While Neder's focus and brevity is clearly a strength, and the topic of evil and sin is among Barth's most opaque, this section raises important questions regarding Barth's use of "reality" as both an eschatological and ontological construct and the tensions that may arise from the overlap of these categories, as well as Neder's reading of Barth's notion of freedom which excludes freedom to sin. The choice not to pursue these issues as they arise can be seen as both a strength and potential weakness of Neder's book.

Then, Neder moves to Barth's doctrine of reconciliation in CD IV/1 and explicates "The Grace of God in Christ" in § 57.1, "God with Us, § 58 sections 1 "The Grace of God in Jesus Christ" and 2, "The Being of Humanity in Jesus Christ". Here he includes a helpful treatment of Barth's eschatology within his discussion of objective (*de jure*) and subjective (*de facto*) human participation in Christ from chapter two. In highlighting the eschatological element in Barth's ontic formulation of participation, Neder responds to the criticism that Barth turns humans into "irrelevant objects" by affirming that for Barth "the objective inclusion of humanity in Jesus Christ is not the end of the story, but the beginning" and further that "Objective participation is a promise which demands an unconditional response" (p. 47). This inclusion of the eschatological aspect of Barth's understanding of participation is a welcome addition to Neder's ongoing discussion of objective/subjective participation.

It is in this vein that Neder poses the question: "Which is more basic – *objective* union with Christ, on the one hand, or justification, sanctification, and vocation on the other?" With an eye toward Barth's eschatology, Neder finds that "The question immediately answers itself, however, because the objective being of humanity in Jesus Christ *is* justification, sanctification and vocation" (p. 57). In holding that for Barth Jesus Christ '*is*' justification, sanctification and vocation, Neder places a lot of weight on eschatological objectivity in Barth, a strand which can be seen to be developed in tension with Barth's notion of ontological objectivity developed in Christ's prior election and determination for humanity. While Neder certainly does not neglect the eschatological aspect of Barth's notion of participation, this section serves as an example of an instance when perhaps a fuller treatment might have been beneficial.

Finally, Neder explicates volumes two and three of Barth's doctrine of Reconciliation in § 64.2, "The Homecoming of the Son of Man", § 66.2 "The Holy One

and the Saints”, and § 71.3 “The Goal of Vocation”, and picks up some of the major threads of his previous chapters including Barth’s actualistic Christology, his understanding of history and the objective/subjective paradigm for humanity’s participation in Christ. Neder enriches his discussion of Barth’s actualistic Christology in his handling of the *unio hypostatica*, where he finds that “the history of Jesus Christ—his one person and work—is the ‘mutual participation’ of the human essence in the divine and the divine essence in the humanity” (p. 61). Based upon the “mutual participation” of Christ’s natures Neder finds that: “The participation of humanity in Jesus Christ occurs objectively within this history of mutual participation and subjectively in a way that corresponds to this history” (p. 61). In nuancing this oft-developed theme, Neder makes the key point that “Jesus Christ is a human being, an acting agent, inasmuch as he is *responsive* to the actions of God. His human actions do not originate with his humanity but happen humanly as he responds to God” (p. 70). Neder’s exposition of Barth’s focus on Christ as *the* human whose being in act occurs in perfect correspondence to the prior determination for humanity is a welcome discussion which Neder may well have developed in chapter two, where he explicates CD II/2. Barth’s development of the humanity of Christ serves as one of the more convincing rejoinders to the criticism that Barth fails to adequately develop subjective human reality and action.

Rather than using his conclusion to summarize his findings, Neder makes the interesting choice to tie together two topics of substance, Barth’s understanding of the sacraments and his “*simul peccator et sanctus*”, and to introduce a comparison of Barth’s rejection of deification with the Orthodox doctrine of *theosis*. I term this choice “interesting” not merely because it is unconventional to handle new issues of substance in a conclusion, but because in part, he has handled key elements of each of these discussions previously. However, in his conclusion he works to bring these various elements together into a unified and conclusive discussion that helps the reader tie together some threads Neder strings throughout his exposition.

Overall his handling of these topics is very well done, and each fits nicely into the framework of his argument. Particularly beneficial is the *simul peccator et sanctus* discussion in which Neder sees that, in contrast to Luther, Barth’s construction of “the *simul* doctrine denotes an eschatology” that serves to highlight the tension in Barth’s thought between his use of “reality” in both its ontic (de jure) context as well as its eschatological (de facto) context. He finds that Barth’s emphasis on the eschatological reality of sanctification “ultimately cuts against Barth’s affirmation of de facto participation in Christ” (p. 85). It is helpful that Neder explores this tension, but interesting that he chooses to do so in his conclusion, rather than in chapters three and

four in which it might have received a more appropriate level of attention.

Further, while Neder’s choice to compare Barth’s rejection of deification to the admittedly complex Orthodox doctrine of *theosis* was clearly an ambitious topic which may require further study, his handling of such an intricate discussion in a brief space generally was very well done. While some might fault Neder for introducing a new, highly involved discussion and handling two areas of substance in a conclusion, I found his decision both challenging and enlightening.

Neder’s study is well researched and well written and presents few opportunities for criticism. However, one could question Neder’s intention and execution of his second stated goal, namely, to demonstrate that “this theme [participation in Christ] is not a late development, but is present at the outset of the *Church Dogmatics* and functions importantly throughout the work as a whole” (p. xii). I have noted that a strength of Neder’s project is his focus and his ability to remain thorough yet concise and I have pointed out instances when perhaps his sketch could explore issues more fully; yet one could ask whether this purpose coheres with the theme of participation in Christ or if perhaps Neder is inserting another seemingly unrelated discussion into his project. While the issue of the extent of continuity of Barth’s thought throughout the breadth of the *Church Dogmatics* is surely worthwhile and can be seen as relating to the topic of participation, one might ask if the discussion is less pertinent to Neder’s topic than some of the issues he chose not to treat or treated only briefly.

In conclusion, Neder’s work is an extended discussion of Barth’s understanding of human participation in Christ set within the framework of Barth’s actualistic Christology and anthropology that is focused on Barth’s development of humanity’s objective and subjective participation in Christ. Overall Neder’s project is well executed, thorough and concise and is a significant contribution to the existing literature covering Barth’s understanding of participation.

Keith Erickson
Durham, North Carolina

The KBSNA is grateful to **Phil Ziegler** and to **Keith Erickson** for their service in reading and reviewing these books for our readers.

Anyone interested in reviewing books for future issues of the Newsletter is most welcome to contact the editor at the email address listed below.

Announcement

A new group called the “Alcuin Group of the Karl Barth Society” met in Stuart, Florida on March 8, 2010. At their meeting they discussed Karl Barth’s biography and his writings on the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. Fourteen “members” participated, with two participating via Skype. Their next meeting will be in June and will take place via Skype and email. It will be chaired by the Rev. T. J. Gentry, D. Phil., a Presbyterian and scholar. Thanks to Peter W. Riola for this information.

Food for Thought

“If it were a principle and not a name indicating a person, we should have to describe it as the epistemological principle of the message. Where between man and man there is real communication of the report of what took place in Him and through Him, He Himself is there and at work, He Himself makes Himself to be recognised and acknowledged. The Christian message about Him—and without this it is not the Christian message—is established on the certainty that He is responsible for it, that He as the truth speaks through it and is received in it, that as it serves Him He Himself is present as actuality, as His own witness. He Himself by His Spirit is its guarantor. . . . He Himself is the hope of freedom and enlightenment for the many who have not yet received and accepted it. He Himself above all is the comfort, and the restlessness, and yet also the uplifting power in the weakness of its service. In a word, the Christian message lives as such by and to the One who at its heart bears the name of Jesus Christ. It becomes weak and obscure to the extent that it thinks it ought to live on other resources” (*CD IV/1*, p. 17).

“The Christian theological tradition has always been in agreement that the statement ‘The Word was made flesh’ is not to be thought of as describing an event which overtook Him, and therefore overtook God Himself, but rather a free divine activity, a sovereign act of divine lordship, an act of mercy which was necessary only by virtue of the will of God Himself. The statement cannot be reversed as though it indicated an appropriation and overpowering of the eternal Word by the flesh. God is always God even in His humiliation. The divine being does not suffer any change, any diminution, any transformation into something else, any admixture with something else, let alone any cessation. The deity of Christ is the one unaltered because unalterable deity of God. Any subtraction or weakening of it would at once throw doubt upon the atonement made in Him. He humbled Himself, but He did not do it by ceasing to be who He is. He went into a strange land, but even there, and especially there, He never became a stranger to Himself” (*CD IV/1*, p. 179).

Message from the President

Dear Friends,

It’s time once again for me to ask you to support our work by paying your dues. I am grateful, as ever, for those who have already done so and for the consistent support of so many of you over the years.

I think we can all imagine what a loss it would be if there were no Barth Society, or if there were no regular sessions in conjunction with the AAR and now also the SBL. During the period when the professional societies have been holding separated meetings, we have tried to present programs in both venues. This has not been easy, but I think it has been well worth it.

The Barth Society, by now, has a well-deserved reputation as a place where serious theology can be discussed in circumstances where that is otherwise not always possible. I would very much like to see greater involvement from women and ethnically diverse groups. Please give that some thought and send us your suggestions.

We have an exciting program for the coming fall, and we should be able to announce it soon, once the final details are in place.

Please take a moment right now to write us a check so that our work can flourish.

Sincerely,
George Hunsinger

ANNUAL BARTH SOCIETY DUES

Everyone interested in joining the Karl Barth Society of North America is invited to become a member by sending your name, address (including email address) and annual dues of \$20.00 (\$10.00 for students) to:

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